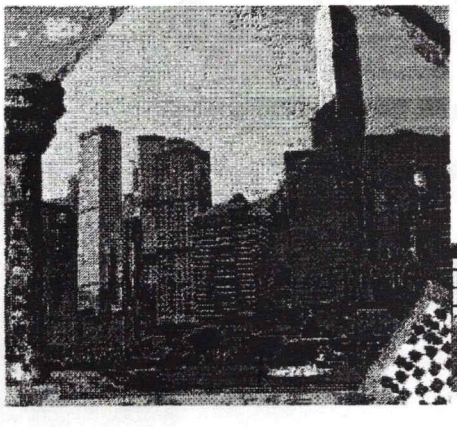
LEGENDS

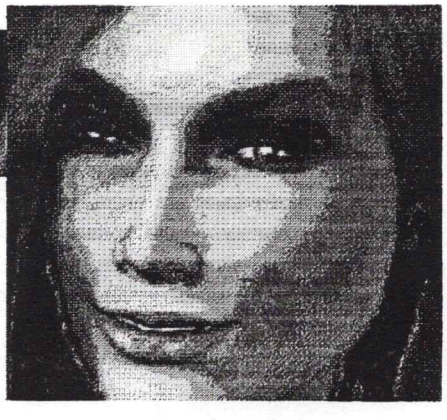
ISSUE #117 – DECEMBER 2001

FEATURES THIS MONTH:



THE FAKE
BY SUE SIMPSON

Aga Saga
by Logan Russell



Credits

Editor: Marcus Pan

Cover: Lee Alverson, Maik Schlundt, Marcus Pan

Illustrators: The Parking Lot is Full, Lee Alverson, Maik Schlundt

Writers: J 'Hirez' H-R, Rat Bastard, Sue Simpson, KT Lowe, Mike Ventarola, Logan Russell, Pat Hawkes-Reed (GothPat), The Mean Little Man, Chris Eissing, Dan Century, Marcus Pan

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Masthead Type Thingee

The Cover: It sucks because Marcus made it. The illustration clips are by Lee and Maik from the corresponding stories.

Illustration: Lee Alverson, coveted artist of the recent *Disoriented* series (Legends #109-#113) and other fiction features, illustrates Sue Simpson's *The Fake*. New artist Maik Schlundt appears this month with new writer Logan Russell with *Aga Saga*.

Writing: Sue Simpson appears this month after a complete absence of any fiction in last month's issue with a double shot, including the feature we already spoke of. Logan Russell is a new writer from the UK who you will see more of in the future – this is his debut in Legegnds with *Aga Saga*. Most of the music review staff checks in with various write-ups on a number of new releases around the globe. The Mean Little Man takes on Martha Stewart this month and KT Lowe does a bit of poetry. There's a few things from me too, but those don't matter.

About Legends: Legends has been published since October 1990. All issues released (#1 - #65 as 2nd editions) are available for $5.00 each to cover mailing costs. **In-stock issues and advance subscriptions are available for $3.00 each issue.** Make checks/money orders payable to Marcus Pan. Any submissions of art or literature are greatly appreciated and accepted on a donatory basis. The submitter receives the issue in which it appears free of charge. Advertising is available both in the hardcopy version and as banners on the online version of Legends Magazine. Rates are shown below – all hardcopy rates are half off because I'm a jobless bum – these rates available only for a limited time. All writers and artists retain copyright for their work. The collection of such, i.e. this issue of Legends Magazine itself, is copyright © 2001 by Marcus Pan.

Contacting: Send all review submissions and other post materials to Legends Magazine, 158 Main St., South River, NJ, 08882. Or call (732) 432-4285. I can also be contacted via e-mail by writing to marcus@legendsmagazine.net. Come see us at www.legendsmagazine.net on the Web. Bands and labels, keep your new music coming. **Special consideration for new and indie artists!**

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THE DARKER THE MUSIC...
...THE BRIGHTER THE MIND!

Editor's Notes

What a piece of shit for a cover this month. Can't win them all – and since I'm still lurking in the bowels of Unemployment Purgatory it's the most I could offer you. Nonetheless I think our heavy return to fiction this month will be highly appreciated by a lot of you. Of course we have the music thing going – Mike's *MP3: The Music Revolution* is with us as well as a number of reviews from nearly the entire staff. Even more reviewers will be joining us as we move along in the near future. Meanwhile I'll see what I can do about the dayjob situation so that I could bring you some decent f'in covers once again. Maybe I can get Rev. Daryl Litts to handle next month's...I guess we'll see.

I halved all advertising prices in the hardcopy edition this month, see page 2 for details and price lists. This month's issue of Legends Magazine is brought to you in part by **Only Sorrow, Lethe Press** and **Nilaihah Records**! And the number **7** and the letters **L** and **C**.

No music interviews this month. We had Massiv In Mensch scheduled, but due to a rather massive system virus that knocked the Legends computer down for nearly a week of recovery time, things went awry and that didn't occur. We have a double shot of interview features next month planned – Massiv In Mensch should be handles by review staffer Zubrovka, and I have plans to do the same with another ArtOfFact label band, Netz. Also, Netz has just released **Werk02** which just came into the office the other day – so these guys are moving hot and heavy in the EBM/electronic scene so check them out early and get more next month.

Fiction is the big thang this month, starting with a double-shot of Sue Simpson including *The Fake*, which is one of our features. Her mate Logan Russell debuts in Legends this issue with his *Aga Saga*. Also look forward to his upcoming two-part mini series, *Safe As Houses*, set to debut early next year.

Hot picks on the list of reviews we bring you for December that I encourage you to check out: the latest from ThouShaltNot – **The Holiness of Now**. ADSR keeps bringing us some of the best EBM work you can find, and Mike V. looks into this recent release from this Seattle based label. Christopher – **Wer Next Project**. Building on the interview from our September issue, Mike V. also delves into this release by the MP3.com heavy hitter. Libitina, UK darlings who've been busy since their '97 **A Closer Communion** release, finally kick out their follow-up album **Weltanschauung**. Rat Bastard takes a look at this one. And more of course.

In books I check out some thriller fiction in my review of *The Alchemist*, and delve into sci-fi with *Race Against Time*. There's essays by me, an essay by KT Lowe and the Mean Little Column and more beyond that. So have at it.

Marcus Pan
November 25, 2001
1:27PM

REVIEW: SLOW LORRIES – "SLOW LORRIES"

By J 'Hirez' H-R

I have to say now that I find it impossible to dislike a band who write songs with choruses that go "Science is amazing." Of course if that were the only good thing about this mob, I'd be stuffed for words to fill in the rest of the space before the bottom of the page. Luckily for me, and Papa Pan's blood-pressure, there's a set of other things to care for in here as well.

According to the documentation that came stuffed in the CD, they're from Sacramento, formed in 1994 and played out for two years before singing-bloke decided to go wander the planet for the second half of the decade. Now they're back and gigging regularly. Jolly good show.

It occurs to me to wonder which side of the 'recess' (for JG Ballard fans everywhere) the songs here were written. I am strongly reminded of 'Copper Blue'-era Sugar in places, and for that reason there's a comfortably retro feel at work. Or maybe that was the last time I heard anybody bothering with tunes. No matter, there's that same impression of 'more guitars than guitarists' and downright bloody clever lyrics that manage to be completely American – English bands sound faintly ludicrous when the songs contain references to 'Catching the A train' or anything to do with skyscrapers – while at the same time the songs remind a chap of the Beatles or XTC. I wish I knew why. Maybe it's the guitars manage to chime lots without sounding crap, or the tasteful keyboards and descending guitar riff in *Diamond Eyes* that does Eleanor Rigby impressions before going off at a tangent and channelling the best bits from Hoover dam, or maybe it's the way the brass at the end of *Elevator Number Six* manage to sound both cheesy and not cheesy at the same time. Zen trumpets. Dig it daddio.

Finding myself in a bar where this lot were playing unexpectedly would be the start of a fine weekend, I suspect.

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IMAGE OF A CLOWN

By Sue Simpson

Matt was in a real pisser; having to drag your four-year-old kid brother along all day was no joke. The only way he'd been able to get some much-needed dosh from his folks was by agreeing to take Jack along to the fair with him. Matt was not a happy man.

The travelling fair only came to town twice a year and all the local youth looked forward to its arrival. Matt was just turned sixteen and having to baby-sit the little arse was a blight on his otherwise worry free life. He knew that having Jack with him in regard to pulling was a double-edged sword. On the one hand it was great for reeling the birds in. Once he had them, he knew it wouldn't be long before they succumbed to the irresistible Matty charm. However, Jack's pretty blonde looks and girlie curls had them in raptures. "Oh isn't he sweet? Isn't he cute? Isn't he adorable, I could just eat him." And it had the added bonus of giving the girlies the idea that he was a caring and sensitive type of guy which in the 'getting into their knickers' game was no bad thing. On the other hand, just ten minutes in the company of Mafia

Jack and they were offski down the road as fast as their platform shoes would carry them.

Jack's two favourite words this week were 'tits' and 'bollocks.' He had the limited vocabulary of your average four-year-old and yet his ability to insert those two words into a multitude of sentences, on a vast array of subjects, was worthy of the grudging respect of even his elder brother. However, no matter how secretly 'cool' Matt thought the kid's colourful language to be, alas the girls did not.

Matt had some great eye contact going with the girl on the hot-dog stall. Two minutes ground work, a little time being attentive and big-brotherly to Jack and she was his for the taking. She *was*, that is, until Jack had to go and steal not only his thunder but also his chances of a leg over that night.

"Now then sweetie," said the glorious Lori as she leaned right out over the kiosk counter, revealing her name tag *and* the fantastic alpine view of a sweeping cleavage. "What would you like on your burger?" She smiled that condescending smile that all girls on reaching puberty seem to adopt when mushing over a small child. The one that doesn't leave until they have kids of their own and realise what horrible little shits they really are.

'Oh no,' thought Matt. He knew that look, he'd seen it before. You could almost see the cogs turning in Jack's brain as he searched through his repertoire for the most attention grabbing choice of word.

"Tits," said Jack, in a loud, clear, piping yet somehow angelic voice.

"What?" Said Lori obviously and visibly shocked

"Tits!" Repeated Jack, only this time twice as loud. "You've got tits and sweaty bollocks." Okay; so Matt had to admit to himself that Jack had problems understanding the biological make-up of the female anatomy, but he certainly knew how to get a girl's attention.

Anyway that was that! Matt considered himself lucky not to be wearing his burger and yelled at Jack for the forty third time that afternoon as they turned away. While Matt yelled Jack munched happily on his burger and wore a tomato sauce and mustard smile.

Matt's mood only darkened as he watched his mates flying round on the waltzers. Some had already pulled and had an arm protectively round the landed girl of their choice. As they posed and looked manly and macho, the girls screamed and acted typically girlie. Once or twice Matt caught sight of the tantalising triangle of exposed white panties as one girl's short skirt rose high on her thighs when the waltzer car threw her from side to side.

When Matt couldn't stand it any longer, he forced a rather dubious, but none the less game for anything Jack, on the waltzer's with him and was punished for this by having Jack projectile vomit in a three hundred and sixty-degree circle as the car spun. They left the waltzer's with Matt muttering apologies and headed in the direction of the public toilets for a major clean up operation. Jack, already feeling much better, grinned and wore a vomit smile. He asked for another burger.

As they went into the toilets Jack spotted a clown selling balloons by one of the stalls. He wanted a balloon, he wanted a balloon so badly that he said he might be sick again if he couldn't have one. All through being wiped down with soggy paper towels he asked for a balloon; and a burger and a candyfloss and another go on the waltzers.

"I need to pee," said Jack finally changing the conversation from his shopping list of desperate needs.

"Oh for Christ sake Jack. I've just finished washing your hands, why didn't you say before?" said Matt, shaking his head in frustration.

"Didn't wanna go before. D'ya fink the clown wiv the balloons will still be there?"

"I don't know do I? Listen you go to the bog an I'll wait outside and have a fag. Okay?"

Matt waited until he heard the lock on the stall door slide into position before heading outside. Whilst Jack sat on the toilet, with his pants round his ankles and his feet that were nowhere near touching the floor swinging, he sang, "Big tits and sweaty bollocks!" over and over again in an impossibly high pitched voice.

Matt stood just outside the toilet block and lit a cigarette. He wanted to remain in view of the door in case Jack came out and didn't seem him. He also wanted to see if anyone went into the toilets. Couldn't be too careful with kids these days he told himself. Especially a kid like Jack who despite constant warnings would insist on talking to anyone and everyone he came into contact with.

As he inhaled deeply on his cigarette Sally Jones walked past.

"Hey Mattie how's it going mate? Coming on the speedway?"

"Hey Sal Good to see you. Nah I can't, kid brother's in the bog, got to look after him."

They stood and talked for a couple of minutes and then Sally went off towards the speedway ride. Matt watched her until she walked out of sight. She was one fine lass. Damn the fact that he had the sprog. He took the last drag on his fag and ground it aggressively into the grass verge at his feet.

Thinking about Jack and pulling his mind away from Sally Jones' firm buttocks reminded Matt that the youngster hadn't appeared from the toilets yet. What the hell was the kid up to now, he'd been ages. Bet he's flooded the bloody bogs he thought as he went in to see if Jack was ready.

The first thing that hit Matt as he went back into the toilets was as always the smell stale urine and even more stale disinfectant; it was disgusting. The second thing that hit Matt was the silence. Jack had stopped singing about tits and bollocks and the door to the stall that he had been in was standing open. Jack was not in the toilets.

Matt was furious. This was just the last straw. He'd only been standing outside the door waiting for him. Jack must have snuck past as he was talking to Sally Jones. Matt went outside and began to shout for Jack. He was nowhere to be seen.

"`Scuse me love. Have you seen a little boy with blonde hair please?" he asked a lady walking towards the car park.

The lady crumpled her nose in thought. "Er yes I think I have seen a little boy looking a bit lost. But don't you worry love he's with the balloon seller. I expect the clown was taking him to the information kiosk. It's just over there, next to the hook-a-duck."

"Oh that's brilliant, thank-you. I'll kill the little sod when I get hold of him, wandering off like that."

Matt had been more annoyed than worried about Jack. Jack was one of those kids that didn't get phased by much. Some four-year-olds on finding themselves separated from their family would scream the place down. Not Jack, he'd just find something to amuse himself until his family found him. Matt wasn't at all surprised that he had sneaked past him to find the clown. 'What's the betting he's managed to con him out of a balloon with his little boy lost act?' thought Matt with a wry grin. He loved the little bugger, but my god he was a pain in the arse sometimes.

Matt strode up to the information kiosk where yet another pretty girl waited attendance on the impossible public. He adopted his most charming smile and flashed his perfectly kept teeth at the young girl.

"'Scuse me darlin`. Have you got my little brother here? Apparently the clown was bringing him in this direction."

The girl looked confused, not least by the fact that it never failed to amaze her that we caring, nurturing humans have such a vast ability to lose our children. This would be the seventh lost kid today, luckily the other six had all been rounded up and handed back to their respective families.

"Er no love, there's no little kids here. When did he go missing?"

"Oh about ten minutes ago. A lady saw the clown with him and assumed he was bringing him here."

"What clown?"

"You know the balloon seller dressed up as a clown? He was standing near the hook-a-duck, over by the lavvies."

"I'm sorry but we don't have a clown," She reached under her counter and came up with some papers that she quickly sorted through. "Yes I thought so, Linda Weston and Jane Cross are on balloon sales this week." She cracked a smile. "Now I admit Linda puts the slappy on with a trowel, but she's no clown. Don't worry though We'll soon find your brother. I'll take some details and get a message over the tanoy. We usually find them within about five minutes. Here at Garson's amusements we pride ourselves on great security and safety."

Matt felt the first stirrings of genuine worry. "Listen love, some bloke dressed up as coco-the-fucking-clown was seen with my kid brother and you'd better find him before I do. I know he works here because I saw him myself. You know a clown, pasty make-up, goofy shoes, poor fashion sense. Now either you find him right here right now. Or I will."

"Okay. Okay I'm sure there's a simple explanation for this and we'll get it sorted out. Now can you tell me your brother's name please and what he's wearing?"

Matt went through Jack's details with the girl who constantly tried reassuring him that Jack would soon be found. Matt was getting more and more irate, and the minutes ticked by and still there was no sign of Jack. Sheila the information girl put an urgent request over the tanoy for Jack to be located and brought to the desk.

After ten minutes Jack had not been found and an almost automatically mechanical system of security went into operation. The park gates were locked and security

guards were places by each entrance and along the perimeter of the park. All cars attempting to leave the town's park were searched. Half the catering kiosks were shut down and a ground force of staff searched the park and questioned the fair goers in an attempt to find the missing boy.

Matt felt helpless. Sheila's constant pleasantries and words of encouragement and confidence were irritating and he was ranting at her, himself, and anybody else within ranting distance. A man walked over and introduced himself as Billy Garson, owner of the travelling fair. Matt had someone he could really vent his frustrations on. He jumped and swore at the fair owner, who in turn remained calm and polite and offered the same assurance of confidence in his staff that Sheila had.

"Confidence in your staff?" shouted Matt enraged. "You don't even know who you've got on your bloody staff. This girl didn't even know that you had a clown."

Something altered in Bill Garson's expression. A look that may have been fear passed across his eyes before being quickly replaced by his former guarded expression. His voice held a defensive note when he replied to Matt. "We don't have a clown sonny. Haven't had one for over ten years."

"Well maybe someone ought to tell that to bilbo-fucking-baggins out there because you have got a bloke on your fair ground running round selling balloons to the kids looking for all the world like a clown to me. And what's more Mr. Bloody Garson sir, he's got my little brother, and I warn you arsehole, if he's harmed so much as one hair on my brother's head..."

Matt tailed off as a tense voice came over the tanoy.

"Boss you'd better get over to the wild mouse quick. Something weird's going down. It's Jefferson. I swear, it's Jefferson boss." Had not Matt been already out of the door and racing across the fairground, he would have seen the fairman go as white as a clown's make-up.

By the time Matt reached the wild mouse quite a crowd had gathered. Matt followed their gazes up the huge wood and metal structure. On the very top girder stood a clown, his big shoes hanging over the three inches of angle iron on either side. He swayed a little struggling with his balance. Standing next to him with his little hand in the clown's big one was Jack.

"Jack! Jack! Hang in there mate, I'm coming to get you. You bastard you hurt him and I'll kill you. I mean it dog breath, you let him go!"

The clown focused on Matt and just smiled. Then he continued to look out among the crowd as though he was waiting for someone, as though it was perfectly natural for him to be standing on the top of a seventy-foot structure with three inches of cold iron between him and a long fall.

Matt ran to the bottom of the wild mouse and started to climb. He didn't give a second thought to the fact that he was terrified of heights and that even walking on a thick carpet made him dizzy. He had only just got his second foot off the ground when two large security men pulled him down and wrestled him kicking and screaming to the ground.

"Don't be a fool lad, don't you think we've already thought of that. There's nothing to stop him throwing the kid if we go near him."

Matt crumpled, all the fight gone out of him. He had icy cold sweat running in rivers down the back of his neck. He said in a small voice, "And there's nothing to stop him if we don't."

"Leave it to us lad, we are professionals, you'll only make the situation worse." Matt allowed himself to be led meekly to a side stall.

The man standing behind the rifle range was sheet white and visibly trembling as his eyes bore into that of the clown. "It's Jo-Ho Jefferson. No doubt about it. He was my best mate for fifteen years and I'd know him with or without make-up." The man shook his head as if to clear an obstinate fog that clouded his judgement. "But it can't be. It can't be."

"Look mate," said Matt "If you know anything about this psycho that might help then you'd better start spilling because that's my brother up there."

The man seemed almost relieved to be able to release the words that were struggling to get out of his mouth. He began to talk slowly and monotonously as though he were in a daze.

"It all happened ten years ago. That was the last time we played this town, haven't been back since till now. Jo-Jo `an me, we shared a trailer see, mates we was. He was the best clown alive. Held the kids enthralled when he played his tricks and got up to his antics. He was a good man, you know, a good man. Couldn't believe it at the time, but well he was seen see? Seen runnin` away and seen by the kid." He shook his head again. "It doesn't make sense, he was a good man."

Matt's blood had turned to ice. "What did he do?"

"Well one night after the fair had closed we all decided to go into town for a drink. Jo-Jo had a headache and said that he was going to stay behind and go for a walk along the river before turning in. The grounds were pretty much deserted except for the boss who was in his office doing some paper work. Anyway cutting a long story short the next morning a little kid's found sitting by the river. All vacant and shocked you know, not speaking or nuffin`." The man lowered his voice to an exaggerated whisper supported by hand gestures. "He'd been messed with, you know, down there. Later like, when he'd `ad a cup a tea an` was feelin` better, he gave a full description of Jo-Jo right down to the floppy shoes and shade of lipstick. Boss corob. Coro, ah shit, boss said it was right `cause `ee'd seen Jo-Jo runnin` across the fair yard 'bout the same time. The fair was searched and blood was found from the kid in our trailer." The man's voice tailed off and he looked nervously up at the clown on the fair ride as though he couldn't believe his eyes.

"That's not it all is it? I can tell there's something you're not telling me. What is it?" asked Matt.

"You're damned right there's something else lad, and that's what doing `me `ead in now. Two days later Jo-Ho hung himself from the top girder of the Wild Mouse. Cut `im down meself, I did,`an it was `im all right."

At that moment Garson came huffing and puffing up to the ride. As Matt and the crowed looked on, something in the clown's attitude altered. He straightened up and stared down on the portly man.

Garson was deathly white and looked as though he might pass out at any moment. "Let me send some men up for the boy Jefferson, you know this is not the answer. Let the past rest man. It's over, go back to where you came from and let it be done."

Jack's voice was clear and sharp when he next spoke. The crowed were silent despite the police having closed in around them. The officers were in the process of closing the park and getting the fairgoers out. A core of fair personnel still gathered in a tight group at the foot of the Wild Mouse. Many of them dated back to the time of Jo-Jo Jefferson and the excited mingle of voices instantly froze as Jack spoke.

"He says he won't hurt me. He's nice and I can come down now, but he wants everybody to know the truth." Jack fell silent for a second and tilted his head towards Jefferson. He may have been listening to words spoken by the clown that only he could hear or may have been getting the clown's information some other way but his head was turned toward Jo-Jo in a pose of concentration.

"He says he's innocent," continued Jack "He never hurt that little boy, but he knows who did and he wants that man to come forward now so that Jo-Jo can clear his name."

At that moment bedlam erupted. A scream went up from the crowd as a lady was pushed to the ground. Garson grabbed Lori the hot-dog seller from behind and held a long bladed knife to her throat. The police backed off forming a semi-circle round the fairowner and his hostage.

"Let me go now, or so help me God I'll kill her. I've got nothing to lose. I want a bag stuffed with used notes from all the vending booths and rides and I want a car and a clear four hours to get away. That's the deal gentlemen or I'll cut the girl from ear to ear." Lori whimpered quietly and tears streamed down her cheeks and dripped off the cold steel of the knife at her throat.

"Okay Mr. Garson. I'm Chief Superintendent Grey and I'm prepared to talk this through with you."

Garson's eyes darted from one police officer to the next and saw that he was cornered. He was sweating and his blue shirt developed a large oily looking stain under each armpit and down the centre of his back. He was a desperate man in a desperate situation and the knife began to shake uncontrollably in his hand. He tightened his grip both on Lori and the knife and a thin drizzle of bright red capillary blood oozed down between the girl's breasts. "Let the girl go Garson," shouted Grey.

"I can't can I? I've had it. Cornered and trapped, so you meet my demands inspector, or I'll have no choice but to kill the girl, and then hopefully if I have time, myself as well, I swear to you here and now though that it was only ever the one time. My God how I hated myself for it and despite the urges I have never once touched a kid before or since." Garson raised his eyes to the clown on top of the ride. "I'm so sorry Joey, I never really meant for you to be blamed, but you see I looked out of the window and saw the curious kid looking through the windows of your trailer. Your spare clown gear was hanging in my office back from the cleaners, and Joey I swear to you it just happened that way." Garson was sobbing but still held Lori as firmly as before.

"He says rot in hell," said Jack and then he paused momentarily before adding, "you scummy rat's bollocks." The police continued to reason with Garson, but the man was becoming more and more hysterical. If they didn't find a way to get to Lori soon he would act out of desperation. He had already said he had nothing to lose.

Something somewhere near the end of Garson's tether snapped and everyone assembled sensed that this was it. He moved the point of the blade into the cleft of Lori's throat. Then he looked up at Jefferson. "You pushed me to this. This one's for you Jo-Jo." His arm tensed and there was an almighty crack as he fell to his knees. Lori, feeling the knife go slack, at once twisted away from his grip. She stumbled as he fell and became entangled in his arms and legs, but then she was free and running across to the waiting police officers with tears streaming down her cheeks.

Garson rolled on the ground screaming in pain and clutching his right thigh as a pond of dark red arterial blood splurged in an arc from the gun shot wound.

The man from the rifle range walked over to the nearest policeman and handed over the spent pistol. In the confusion he had run to Garson's office where he knew a browning was kept in the drawer. He had shot the fair owner in the leg with his own gun.

Two security men were already scaling the ride to get Jack. Somehow they knew that there was no longer any threat of danger. Two more security men were holding back a determined Matt.

The rifle range man looked up at Jo-Jo Jefferson and raised his right hand in salute. "That one was for you my friend."

The climbers were nearing the top of the ride and all eyes were turned on them and the clown. The sun unexpectedly came from behind a cloud and glinted off the girders of the ride, momentarily blinding everyone on the ground below. The intense glare only lasted a matter of seconds. When they could see, the men were clambering over the top girder and taking a firm hold of Jack. The clown was gone.

Jack and Matt were taken home in a police car. Although he said he was never even a little bit scared because the clown had been very nice to him and promised all along that he wouldn't hurt him, the emotion of the day had all become too much for Jack and he rested in Matt's arms and cried quietly. Matt wasn't crying so quietly and sobbed openly as he held his brother tightly.

Jack explained that although it looked scary he had never been in any danger, because the clown was 'magic' and that they had "sort of flown" up to the top of the ride. Jo-Jo was his friend he said and had asked him first if he would help him. "You see Matt," Jack explained, "He knew it would worry you but he had to do it to make Mr. Garson tell the truth, and he held my hand real tight all the time. I like Jo-Jo. Do you like Jo-Jo Matt?"

When he could speak he said. "Hey bro' you've got big tits and sweaty bollocks. And yes, I suppose Jo-Jo's one of the good guy's. But I gotta` tell you now little man if he ever takes you up on anything like that again I'll..."

Jack turned his face towards his brother. He had two brown rivers of muck flowing down his otherwise angelic cheeks, and he was grinning widely.

"Dog breath." he said to his brother, giving his latest phrase its first public airing.

"Oh Mum is just going to love that one," said Matt grinning back.

LOVELIEST DECEMBER

By KT Lowe

Love and fuck are four letter words.

I have had my lover for a while – 1/5 of a life is significant for a young adult no matter which section of that life was involved. I have had my emotionally unattainable lover conjugally and adamantly over four years in clandestine arrangements, barely scheduled evenings where the only methodically laid out plan was the excuse with which to allay my parents' questions. His girlfriend has always been immaterial. He never mentions her and she is a participant in our love through sheer nonparticipation. She is silently held to his heart as I am to my soul with his words surrounding us both. I am not a great beauty, but he manages to convince me otherwise and not just for an evening. There is something in his thought pattern that leads me to wonder aloud if he even exists – but I have seen him photographed and these photos were not doctored in any way, so he must be at least substantive.

He is a faithless one. He places his heart in politics and his hands in his pockets, so where his affections emanate from is a complete mystery. Still, one day he knocked me on my back with the ultimate pronouncement: he loves me. He knows he loves me. He has had time to search himself and he has found that. He tells it to me instead of a gift – honored with eight letters placed on my lips for reciprocation.

I am one of those fairy creatures who always does the right thing and never reaps the rewards. I have studied hard for an entry level position in a small law office with no room for advancement. My days are spent lugging heavy chronicles of human ambivalence toward unselfish justice (revised, annotated and clothed in the finest Corinthian leather) and dusting off their tops looking for the magic spell which will condemn one and set another free. I know these books as well as my lover's body – I know which pages are missing and which ones have been superseded by the handy leaflets inserted yearly into the back of the book. Each malocclusion in the binding is the result of the flaws of my predecessors. Nobody knew that the books were speaking. Or maybe they did, so they tried to shut them up. Every day I find a new remedy – a statute for this woman who was disfigured in routine surgery, a precedent for a child who lost an eye in a fight, a few notations in a landmark case for a black man who was denied advancement due to his race. A sorcerer's apprentice would be hard pressed to repeat the miracles I've performed in just a few short years.

But my lover has already heard it all before. He has never read the books or talked to the people, but he already knows the story and he passes his own judgment without pity. Some days I can't look at my books simply because he would know them better than I would by merely peeking into the library in the dark. He is a brilliant man. My lover is hard to denounce and impossible to ignore. By sheer impetuousness he will be a millionaire before he is forty. And he loves me.

He loves me! Like I said, I could not believe it. I wanted to deserve it, had ached for those three little words from him. That man whom I had seen grow from a scraggled drunken artist lost in Detroit and up to his neck in debt to a young educated single small business owner was the object of my affections. Had been the object of my affections for years. His absolute beauty drove out every other standard for my eyes. The logical purpose of his walk astounded my knees to the point of collapse. The slight tousle of the demurely untamed curls that sprouted from his braincase drove my body into a jittery frenzy. And so forth. He was inhumanly beautiful. A heartbreaker. A logician with a sense of style.

Has anyone ever noticed that when one compares his or her loveliest in all the world to a deity, he or she always picks a Greek or Roman one? Men are like Apollo pulling chariots and women are like Aphrodite or Venus walking out of the sea. It's all the same story: boy or girl meets boy or girl and has no other words to explain their madness for this gorgeous/strong/delicate/sensitive/PERFECT creature who fulfills every single wish on the part of the entranced. And then they date. Sometimes they marry. Woe be to the multitudes that eventually wake up, for the Kingdom of God is no longer theirs.

If I'd awakened ages ago or had reached a point where I never would, then I would have no problems whatsoever with anything. But, stupid me, I have developed my loveliest's bad habit of questioning the obvious. I am a language-based person, out of dealing with books for extended periods of time, so my questions naturally asked about his words. I defined them:

I: A single entity, usually a selfish concept, identifying the principal/direct object of a relationship of some sort. Generally denotes ownership or dominance. May be used in the abstract, but not suggested, as it lessens the impact of the word.

Love: an emotion consisting of contradictory elements, both physical and illusory. Has been characterized as an overall good feeling, a sense of peace, a concern for something other than oneself, a desire for the greatest result of said emotion shared with someone else through cooperation and preset rules. Alternately described as a bane on society's youth leading them to immoral behavior committed in its name, a torture of the mind because it supposedly does not make sense, a sacrifice made by two people for a whole devoid of substance and an outmoded concept except when expressed in universal terms, social measures enacted to the benefit of all and forced charity.

You: The receiving person in a relationship. The object of an action's result. Possibly an antagonist. An unselfish concept, denoting someone other than self. The opposite of I.

On any plane of reality, this layout makes no sense whatsoever. I and You are understood in cause/effect terms, but Love as an intermediary has no set meaning. Love is not clearly indicated to mean affection or drudgery. My incredulous mind immediately seized that contradiction. What did he mean, exactly, by his love: does he view me as a queen or as a project? I don't even know if I'm insulted: my meaning of love has come to include such things as valor, honesty, unchallenged sexual prowess and acts of loyalty beyond human endurance.

His love made me human, so I could no longer endure his beauty in sight of my own paltry features. A single touch from him, once more welcome than a lifetime of pleasure, was now anticipated with a bit of restlessness. My body almost died

from skin hunger, but it could not stand his touch for fear of imperfection on both our parts. His words were used to elaborate to the point of obscurity the depth of his love from no source. My mouth was dulled with the kisses we used to exchange in secret now looking for a place of torment to be free. If we should ever marry, I will try to be there for the wedding, even though no one will be invited.

I am here tonight and I want his body. I want a body that will not love me, but he will not want my body if I incite him to rage. I know his body well – I have drunk from it many times. I want his love and I want his mind and I want his eyes to drop casually into mine and I want none of these together. I would take another lover, but it would start the process all over again. My hands are small enough to stroke him intimately without fanfare in any situation, but he is sensitive and will not let my hands please him so I can please myself. I want him to kiss my forehead where my hairline starts because he does it so well. But he has to work tonight and he had to work last night and he has to work sixteen hours a day every day for nothing lets a small business owner relax for a moment. But he loves me. Damn it, that man loves me! It's everything I said I wanted. I want that name attached to mine forever as long as we both shall walk this earth in ¾ time, andante. But I don't know what it means and I am afraid I'll lose even the small joy of ignorance. I know he won't tell me; he claims I am intelligent enough to figure this out on my own.

OFF THE SHELF: "RACE AGAINST TIME"

By Marcus Pan

Once again we return to Piers Anthony with another stand-alone science fiction novel. Piers is one of the most common names in the science fiction and fantasy genres and you can find multitudes of his work from multi-book series to stand alone science fiction. He worked mostly during the modern heyday of science fiction and fantasy in the 1970s and 1980s and his popularity continues today, with such recent attempts as *Dooon Mode, The Dastard* and his autobiography *How Precious Was That While*.

It seems to me that *Race Against Time* is an earlier work – not only did it come out in 1973, it is also obviously lacking in the finesse and style that Anthony is said to have in his later novels. It takes on a circa-*Star Wars* space saga angle. The plot is quite good, and will have conspiracy theorists enjoying the basics of the book. But it is treated with a childishness and unoriginality that I found lacking. Piers took a perfectly good book idea and built onto a teenage space-saga boorishness that in the end leaves you quite unfulfilled.

The book's ending was rather good, with subtle explanations of current Standards of living on Earth around 2300 AD. The time period however, since we're already in this millennium, dates the book badly as you wonder how everything that supposedly has occurred in the history of this milieu couldn't have done so in the span of 300 years. It would have been better if Piers didn't fully set the date/time in this version of Earth as stringently as he did. Another issue is the technology of the era. Interesting both in form, function and décor, but lacking in the way of definition.

I'm not sure I agree with the racial segregation and purity issues that Piers supposes in *Race Against Time*, but it's a neat angle and an interesting thing to think about even if you have to rifle through 250+ (paperback) pages of teenager-ish verbiage. If you're into the space drama style, and have a thing for Luke Skywalker in particular as one of our main characters here (John) not only reminds you of the same, but according to the cheesy cover even looks the same, then by all means have at it. But if your palate for science fiction requires more of a refined and deeper approach, then might I suggest a foray into Asimov, Heinlein or Bester rather than earlier works of Piers Anthony.

Later works of Piers? The jury is out...until I have read some.

"Race Against Time" by Piers Anthony
Published by Tom Doherty Associates (a Tor Book)
Copyright © 1973 by Piers Anthony
ISBN 0-812-53111-6

REVIEW: THOUSHALTNOT — "THE HOLINESS OF NOW"

By Mike Ventarola

Having been a fan and consumer of the ADSR Musicwerks label, one can contend that they have not put out a dud yet, nor is it ever anticipated that they ever will. Thankfully, ThouShaltNot is in their fold, and quite frankly the 11th Biblical commandment should read that Thou shalt NOT ignore ThouShaltNot!

This duo marries splendid vocal harmonies along with great pulse rhythms, angelic choirs and everything but the kitchen sink. After hearing the onslaught of tired NIN clones and non-imaginative electronic bands, this group is REFRESHING to the ears. That's right folks, they can SING as well as play. No phony compressed vocals here that sound like someone gargled with Drano for the tenth time. Also missing are the cheap casio tones with limited ranges.

Here, the singing style is beyond pleasing to the point of being almost subliminally hypnotic. On a surround sound stereo, this CD cooks! You are enveloped in a wall of sound that bounces around the room while the vocals seem to go through you in some type of cosmic spiritual interplay. Their style could be equated as a cross between Germany's Behind The Scenes and Clan of Xymox with a lot of extra touches to avoid these same comparisons. The States have been long overdue for a band to rival some of the best Euro counterparts. It's a tall order, but this band is heading in that direction.

Soren Grey initially catches the listener off guard. We are introduced to an angelic choir and then a fluttering of electronic music layered over deep pounding drum sounds. Do not adjust your set, this is how it is supposed to sound. Fear not though, because after the intro, the fluttering coalesces into a Clan of Xymox style with a few baby cries tossed in to punctuate the lyrics about someone not being allowed to grow up and out of the shadow of the maternal clutches. *Last Comfort* deals with finding the joy of regret and moving forward while "we clutch today in disdain of tomorrow."

Without Faith is intense in its simplicity. Lyrically, we are introduced to a dialogue between 2 people. One asks the other to prove themselves, somewhat demarcating that they themselves are not trustworthy, and are nothing more than mere blood and flesh without a soul. The vocal chorus on this track will send chills down the spine with the beauty and delivery. *In The Tower* begins somewhat ambiently and then becomes a somewhat ominous electronic track. Gregorian style choruses are infused between the white noise and pulsing rhythms.

The Sting has dialogue from radio's and television sets layered between orchestrated violin music. In an instant, it erupts into a hip swinging beat that is highly addictive. This is not only a great cut for the dance clubs, but something to do the horizontal lambada by! If you don't sing along with the chorus by the second time you hear it, you are surely dead. *Credo* has a similar rhythm line to the Halloween theme at the opening which then delivers elements of dark monastic chorus lines that are simply superb. The track takes us on an introspective journey that despite all that is good and bad in our lives, there remains the element of belief. *The Greater Good* brings us a quirky electronic side of the band where they suffuse rather interesting sound elements in a macabre element similar to a funky Danny Elfman.

Embrace The Sun is segued from the preceding track. Violin echoes under the dance beat giving this a haunted feel. If this track hasn't made it to the club DJ's playlist in your area, REQUEST it! *A Trace* takes us from the bouncy element of the last track and delves towards a sense of darkness with sotto voce spoken lyrics. *In Hope Of Flight* provides a bit of a militaristic drum beat, backward masking and a message about hell. The lyrics are a plea and anticipation for overcoming mediocrity. Again, angelic choruses accompany this track making it hauntingly beautiful while fully danceable.

ThouShaltNot have outdone themselves with this release. Everything about the recording is tightly knit. The lyrics are intelligent and thought provoking. There is even a bit of irony where the positive songs have a doom like atmosphere and the gloomy lyrics have a more upbeat swing to them. **The Holiness of Now** has a pseudo religious element inherent within it without becoming preachy by any means. The utilization of angelic choruses really gives a great body of sound texture to the songs. Reed and Fuleki have such a great harmony together that it sounds as if they rehearsed for 20 years.

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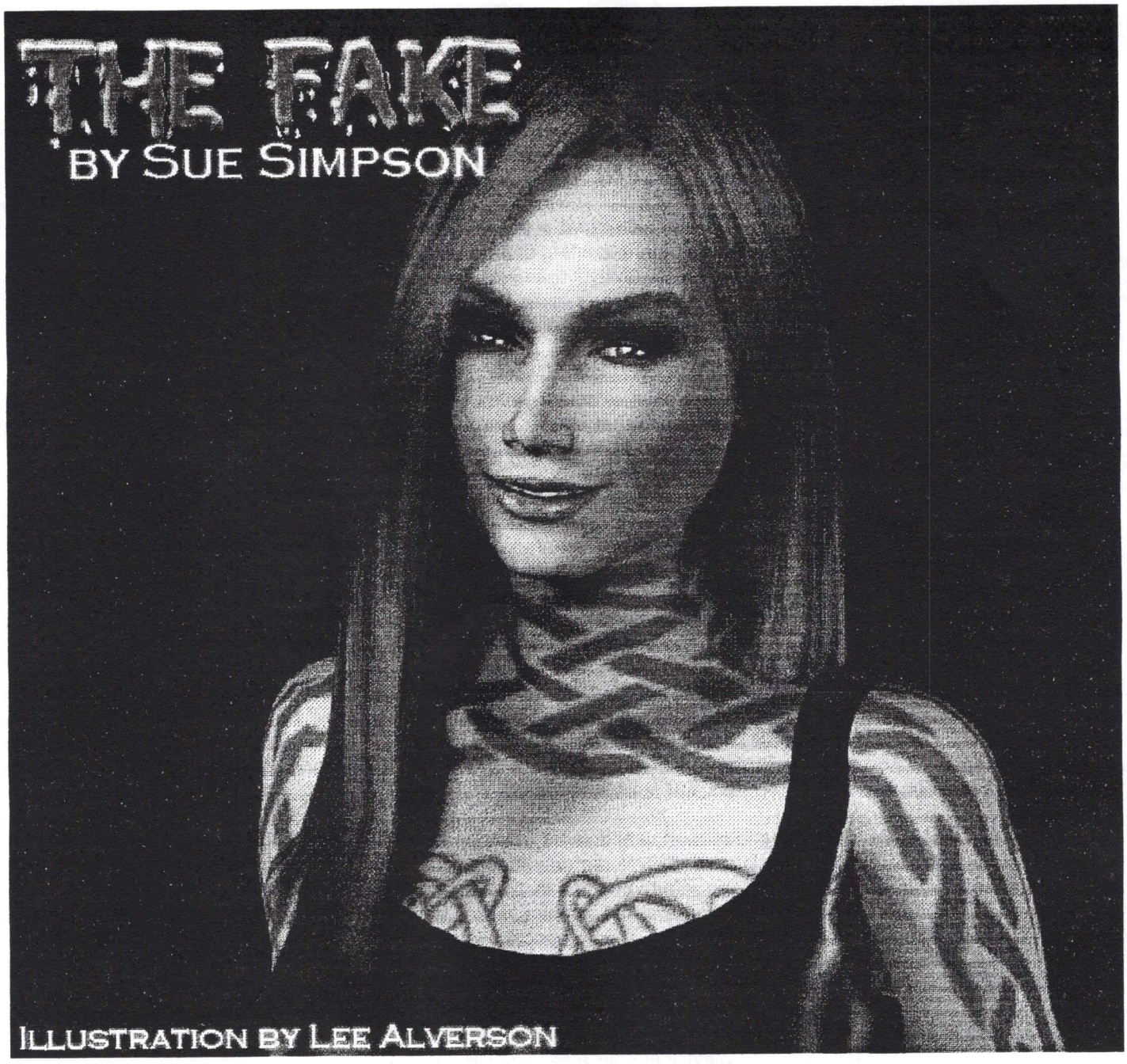

He was a bloke less ordinary, that was her initial opinion of him.

"Well Sall, it is three minutes past twelve, which makes it officially your birthday. I feel a dare coming on." Janet gazed at Sally through vodka clouded eyes.

"Hmmmm, just so long as it doesn't involve moving because my shoes are pissed and there's no way I could possibly trust them to hold me up in their present condition."

The three girls laughed. Jan, Jane and Sally had come out to celebrate Sall's birthday

"Well as a matter of fact it does involve moving, but not very far you only have to stagger as far as the bar. You up for it?"

"Depends." said a doomed Sall "Go on."

"You see that bloke over there?" Jan grinned broadly. She knew her friend would not be able to resist the dare. Sall groaned loudly, already suspicious of what was coming.

"Which one? Big bloke on the left obviously very married and built like a brick out house?"

"Yep that's the fella. All you have to do is go and snog him. Simple!"

"Oh give that girl a medal for originality." cut in Jane. "Poor Sall."

"You can't make me do this." moaned Sall petulantly. "Please don't make me do this. I can't. I can't go up to a total stranger and just snog him. Come on you two. I'll buy the next round even though it isn't my turn. I'll treat us all to pizza on the way home. I'll... I'll...I'll do all the ironing for a month. Don't make me do this."

"But it's a dare." Said Janet and you can't back out of a dare.

"Worse." said Jane. "The stakes have just been raised to a double dog dare. You'd never live it down if you didn't do it." She grinned the evil grin of a Great Dane just before he shags a Yorkshire Terrier. "You go girl!" she added for good measure in a mock American accent.

"Okay. Okay. I'll do it." The other two cheered loudly, causing the eyes of every person in the relatively quiet pub to turn upon them. "I know when I'm beaten, but just think on this. I *will* have my revenge and it *will* be sweet."

Sall leaned forward and decisively drained the last of her vodka and coke. "Lipppy," she demanded holding her hand out to Jane who obligingly rooted in her handbag until she found the dark purple lipstick.

Janet and Jane knew what was coming, but they never tired of seeing it, and were already laughing in the hope that this time for the first time ever she would make a mess of it. Sally took the top off the lipstick and turned it upside down, holding it at arms length she peered into the dull black top as though it was a mirror and expertly applied her lipstick with the other hand. She had explained many times that it was a psychological illusion. The brain knows where the lips are. It is only lack of confidence that requires the use of a mirror. Fool the brain into thinking that you are looking into a mirror and voila the lipstick goes on smoothly and perfectly in place. Regardless of how much vodka has been consumed. Sall smacked her lips together and glared at her friends.

"Oh do I have to?" she wailed

"Go," shouted her friends in unison.

Sall walked in a remarkably straight line over to the group of men standing by the bar. Not for the first time she wished she was eight foot four tall. At five foot ten she told herself that she wasn't over weight, she was just under height. "Dear God," she thought "Please just give me a Barbie doll body for the next three minutes." The good lord remained unobliging.

The men parted like four-day-old milk as Sall homed in on her target. She tapped him gently on the shoulder and he turned from his pint to look at her. "Excuse me love?" She asked blushing furiously.

"Yes?" He looked puzzled.

"You see those two reprobates over there?" she pointed at Jan and Jane who were grinning like a pair of imbeciles and giving exaggerated thumbs-up signals in her direction. The man grinned and nodded. "Well as of about five minutes ago it is my birthday, and it's sort of a tradition that you have to do a dare on your birthday. And I'm really sorry to have to tell you this, but they've dared me to come over and snog you." At this point a great cheer went up from the assembled men and they began whooping and chanting. "Do you mind?" Sall adorned what she hoped was her best pleading expression and finished lamely. "I understand perfectly if you do."

The man turned full on to face Sall and spread his arms. His face cracked into a huge smile. "Well love that's the best offer I've had all night. I couldn't refuse a damsel in distress now could I? You go for it darlin`." At that moment Sall could have kissed him for real just for the fact that he was such a good sport and hadn't made even more of a fool of her than she was already making of herself. She moved into the circle of his arms and their lips met in a full on snog that lasted just long enough for Sall to win the bet. She was the first to break the bond of union that she had forced on the poor unsuspecting man. "Thank-you," she whispered with all sincerity.

She turned round to her friends, punching the air and doing a little victory dance. "Rack `em up girls. It is without a doubt your round." She took a step towards the girls who were still jumping up and down and cheering like idiots, but she was stopped by a warm hand on her wrist. She turned back round to the bar, to be confronted by the most intelligent, laughing eyes she had seen in a long time.

"Hey! Where's mine?" Asked the tall, good-looking man. Sall blushed bright red, but couldn't break the lock that his grey eyes had her held in. He was amused by her discomfort and grinned widely at her.

"Oh the dare only called for me to kiss one person. Sorry." She said trying desperately to regain some composure. She smiled coyly at him and gently pulled her arm from his grasp.

"Whoo what did HE want?" asked Jane as a red faced and much-flustered Sall took her seat.

"Oh you know just another man who wanted me to favour him with a kiss. Happens all the time when you're drop dead gorgeous like me." She dared a sneaky look at the man and he was still smiling over at her. He raised his glass in salute and Sall hastily turned back to listen to whatever it was Jan was saying.

"Well lasses one last drink and we'll head off home eh?" The beauty of the Brown Calf was that drinking time at the weekend came to a close when the last person left the bar. Half the town would congregate there for the lock-in. "I think Sall should go to the bar and get them though. I think someone wants to talk to her." said Jane slyly forcing a ten-pound note into Sall's hand. Sall was secretly glad to have an excuse to go back to the bar.

The bar area was crowded and she had to plead her way through. Although she felt the eyes of the tall man on her the whole time she made a point of not looking in his direction. She was just taking her change when she felt a hand on her hair. "C'mon, tell the truth. This is not for real is it?" It was him and she felt her heart rate shift up a gear.

"Oh you've sussed me out and of course you are quite right it's a wig." Sall grabbed a handful of her hair and held it out to the man. "Here have a pull, careful though or it'll be off in your hand." He took the offered hair, rubbed it through his fingers and then bent down to smell it.

"I have never seen hair like it, so soft and it smells beautiful." Sally gave immense thanks to the God of Pantene for giving her this moment. Her hair was jet black apart from the odd grey tendril round her ears that couldn't be seen and it fell to her waist in length. It was sall's pride and joy and all she felt that she had appearance wise to be proud of. She went to great trouble to make sure that her hair was always kept nice.

Suddenly it seemed the ice was well and truly broken between the two. He introduced himself as Paul and soon they were chatting animatedly oblivious to the fact that the dare twins were sitting back at the table without drinks.

"Can I be very forward?" he asked after about ten minutes of conversation. Oh Oh thought Sall this is it; I'm either going to like the next sentence or its going to be another of those 'another one bites the dust' moments.

"Go on," she answered frowning at him warily.

"Hey don't look so worried." He said softly taking one of her hands in both of his. "You know the bloke you kissed earlier?"

"No I don't know him, but go on." This was sounding iffy she thought.

"Well I do and he's getting married tomorrow. Thing is Sall, that lot are all paired off and going as couples and I'm stuck on my todd. I don't suppose you'd do me the honour of being my guest would you?"

Sally didn't know what to say. First dates were always awkward and to be going to a wedding with a pack of strangers was nerve wracking to say the least, but she'd have rocks in her head if she said no. He might not ask her out again. Her face must have been registering her doubts because Paul dragged her across the room to where his friends had congregated round the pool table. "Hey Gary mate. You don't mind if I bring Sally to the do tomorrow night do you?"

Gary winked at her "Well as long as she's not going to make a habit of snogging me every two minutes. Julie'll have me in the divorce courts before I get me conjugal shag." Everybody laughed and Sally blushed furiously.

"Oh don't you worry Gary love, you are perfectly safe, I couldn't go through that again." Gary played the part of being devastated.

"Hey whats wrong with snogging me? Women don't usually have any complaints." Any doubts Sall had about having a good night the following evening vanished. She liked Paul's friends very much.

When she finally went back to Jan and Jane Paul came too and asked if he could walk her home. She explained that the three of them lived together and always walked home together and he said that he would be happy to walk all three ladies home. It was obvious that Jan and Jane liked him too. They kept nudging her and giving out 'go for it' signals.

Jane put the key in the lock and Jan ushered everybody into the house, including Paul. "Right then." She said, "I'll put the kettle on." Amazingly as soon as they had finished their coffee, the Jays as Sall collectively called them began yawning exaggeratedly. Their 'I'm so tired' act would have been funny if it hadn't been so embarrassingly transparent. They bid Sall and Paul goodnight and went to bed.

As soon as they had gone Paul moved closer to her on the settee and snaked an arm around her shoulders. He drew her towards him and they kissed. Sall let all the barriers slip away from her and she gave herself to the moment. They kissed for a long time, interspersed with brief snatches of conversation. It felt good. Sall felt wanted for the first time in ages.

Paul's kisses became just slightly more demanding. His hand moved up on to her breast. "You've got gorgeous big breasts." he murmured into her ear. This was starting to go too fast. She pushed his arm down and her body stiffened. The barriers came down like re-enforced shutters and she pulled away from him.

He looked searchingly into her eyes confused by her reaction. "I'm sorry. I'm *so* sorry I thought..." His sentence tailed away.

"No. No it's my fault. I'm sorry. I just need you to know that before I get too carried away with you, that I'd like it to be more than just a drunken fumble. I want it to mean something. I just..." Now it was her turn to let the sentence fade away. She had no idea what to say next. She felt wretched. Had she blown it? Would he think she was some kind of frigid neurotic?

"Hey it's okay. It's okay." He pulled her into him and buried his hands in her hair. She could hear his heartbeat as he kissed her forehead gently. "Listen Sall. I like you, I want to be with you, and yes I want to make love with you, but not until you are ready and the time is right. So I'll be a good boy and wait." He finished this with a look so pathetically 'little boy lost' and repentant that Sall laughed.

"You okay?" he asked. Sall smiled and nodded. "Right then sweetheart it's late and I really should be going. You get a good night's sleep and I'll see you tomorrow. We are all right for tomorrow aren't we? I haven't blown it?"

Sall smiled at him. "Of course we are and I'm really looking forward to it." She kissed him full and soft and long. Paul was the first one to break the kiss.

"Hmmm easy girl, you're sending me home to a cold lonely bed remember." He gazed down into her eyes, dropped a last kiss on her cheek and was gone. Sall smiled all the way up the stairs and was still smiling when sleep came to claim her.

And so they fell into a really good relationship based primarily on friendship. More than once over the next month Paul left Sall's house with an uncomfortable tightness in the front of his jeans. She loved the way he never pushed her, and she wanted it to be right before she took him to her bed. Both Paul and Sall led active lives both with their own set of friends. This meant that sometimes they would go several days without seeing each other and then out of the blue one of them would turn up on the other one's doorstep. This suited Sall, she would have preferred just a little bit more order to even out the randomness of it all, but as she reasoned it out to herself she was more or less happy and he seemed to be, so why rock the boat.

It was a Saturday night four weeks from the day they met that 'the time felt right.' The girls had been out for their usual Saturday night of fun and Paul had met up with Sall as arranged for last orders. Since that first night he had been very careful with his advances. Their petting had been welterweight rather than heavy in description and any 'moves' had come from Sally.

His hand rested gently on her shoulder as she kissed him hard. She closed her palm over the back of his fingers and gradually moved is hand down towards her breast. "Touch me," she whispered into his mouth. His hand cupped her breast and began to explore its softness as she lowered her fingers to his upper thigh. He squirmed making whichever part of him she wanted to touch available, and slowly her fingers traced their way up his inner thigh to rest lightly on his erection.

"I want you Sally. God I want you so much."

"I want you too." she murmured.

He took her hand and led her across the room. At the bottom of the stairs Sally stopped him. She stroked the back of his hand distractedly as she searched hard for the words that she had to say before they went any further.

"Paul I ...I haven't been with many men." She began hesitantly, but then the words started to tumble over themselves in her effort to make herself understood. "I'm terrified of waking up one day and not be able to remember the names or faces of all the men I've slept with. I don't want a long string of meaningless lovers. I want one man. One man that I can care about and who in turn will care about me. Look at me Paul, I'm not the type of person people fall in love with, and that's okay, really it is. But I want to know, I *need* to know that this isn't just a quick fling for you. That it means something more."

"Daft Sod," he said. "`Course I care about you. Let's just see how things work out eh? Let's just enjoy each other and see how it goes. I like you. You're funny and kind and sweet, but don't get too serious eh? Not yet, it'll just spoil things."

She couldn't leave it at that. "I just want to know that it's more than just sex. If that's all you want Paul you can do so much better than me. I've been hurt by men who have pretended to want me and then, when they haven't got what they wanted from me have turned nasty and just dumped me. And worse than that, even the couple who have got what they wanted have rejected me afterwards too. I'm not just an easy Saturday night shag. I won't be that for anybody." She finished lamely, but with determination battling for space in her eyes against prickly unshed tears.

"Hey Sall c'mon this isn't like you. What's with the third degree? I know you've been hurt before. I can't promise you my heart and soul forever and ever okay, but I can promise not to hurt you. You hear me I won't hurt you. I promise." He looked at her with open sincerity shining through his eyes. And that was all that Sally wanted to know. She was ready.

Their lovemaking was good. They made love hard and long all that night and late into the following morning. Jan knocked on Sally's bedroom door saying that she'd made coffee. Sall told her to come in and grinned at the shocked look on Jan's face when she saw Paul in bed beside her.

"Well it's about time you two got it together, you've been messing about for weeks." she said recovering her composure. Sall grinned like a chimp with a packet of crisps. "Thank God for insulated walls," said Jan as she left the room to make another cup of coffee for Paul. Sall couldn't help but notice the way Paul admired her shapely legs, legs far better than Sall's own . He'd also let the sheet slip to reveal far more of his naked body than was decent. Sall felt a stab of jealousy and another of unease.

Although the intimacy they shared had been good, it hadn't been tender. Sall had no complaints, she liked hard energetic sex and yet there was still a need in her to be kissed softly and stroked all over with light gentle fingers. After the previous night's passion her body now ached to be loved again, but this time slowly and gently. Sally wanted to feel precious.

As Paul sipped at his coffee, Sall lowered her head to his chest and began to kiss his nipple so, so gently. Her fingers made swirling circles in his chest hair and her breath rippled along his skin in warm currents as her breathing began to harden.

"Hey, hey, hey. Give a guy a break. How many times do you think I can perform without a rest? And anyway sweetheart I've got to go. Things to do. People to see."

And then he was gone.

Sall walked round smiling for the rest of the day. She firmly pushed those niggling doubts to the back of her mind, telling herself that they could all be ironed out with time. After all Paul hadn't been with a woman for quite a while. Of course he was going to be a little bit eager. She grinned as she reminded herself that her part in the proceedings could hardly be described as reticent. As for him rushing off like that, well she already knew that he played golf every Sunday afternoon with the lads. Perfectly understandable, she wouldn't break a date with the lasses for him...would she?

She changed the bed that afternoon, putting crisp, clean bedding on just in case he came that night. She felt sure that he'd be back for more, it had been so good. This was the start of something special. She had a new boyfriend. Sall tried out the word a few times and it felt good. Nothing had ever been said about the terms of their relationship, but now that they had slept together, well of course he was her boyfriend. It felt right. Every thought she had that day was in some way connected with Paul. Every song she listened to was played for him and every breath she took was one less that she'd have to take before she saw him again. For Sally everything had changed. She had slept with Paul and that meant that she had given of her whole self to him. Before that act she could have walked away from him with barely a tear, but now they were connected and Sally had fallen hard.

Much to the two J's disgust she spent over two hours in the bathroom that evening. She soaked in the bath for ages daydreaming of the night to come. She dressed in her prettiest underwear. Paul was going to learn a lesson or two in the sensual art of seduction when he arrived. She had put a casserole in the oven earlier at the same time as she had bribed the J's to make themselves scarce that night. If she and Paul weren't immediately hungry for casserole, then it could be eaten much, much later without anything spoiling.

At eleven thirty just before the J's were due back from the pub, Sally turned the oven off and went to be alone. "Silly cow," she told herself. "It's not as though he said he was coming tonight is it?"

He didn't come the next night or the one after that. In fact it was almost a whole week before she saw him again, and he never seemed to be in when she called. The following Saturday night he came over from the bar with a drink for her and plonked himself down at their table. She made a sarcastic remark about it being a wonder that he could remember what she liked to drink. He was full of apologies and explained that he had been busy and had spent a couple of days away from home

with work. He turned up the charm to the max and Sall couldn't stay mad with him for long.

The sex that night followed pretty much the same pattern as the time before. The following morning Paul got up and left early. Sall no longer thought of it as lovemaking, after just two nights of sharing a bed together, what was happening between them had been demoted to just sex. She wasn't going to give up though. She would talk to him. Most of their time together was great. They still laughed a lot and had fun. It would be all right. She just had to make him more aware of her needs.

He did turn up that night. He'd rung to say he'd be round at about six. He turned up at nine thirty stinking of beer. She fed him. He ate. She fixed coffee. He drank. She sat on the settee. He sat on the chair at the other side of the room. She knew what was coming. He didn't need to say it. She didn't want him to say it. Couldn't bear to hear it. But she knew.

He coughed clearing his throat nervously. The atmosphere was thick. Any voice would find it difficult against the fog of tension.

'Don't speak. Please don't speak, don't say anything at all,' she thought pleading against what she knew was coming. She locked her eyes into the image on the television screen. She was engrossed. It would be rude to interrupt. 'Don't say anything...please.'

"Sall. I..."

'This is it. Oh God this is it. Nothing is going to stop it happening. Even if I throw up right here and now all over the carpet, it won't stop what's coming.' She wanted to throw up, her stomach was tightening and contracting with every second that passed.

He began again. "Sall," and then he just blurted it out. "Sall can we go back to just being friends?"

'He said it. The Bastard.'

Sall turned in her seat and looked at him for a fraction of a second before she had to turn away from him, away from those eyes.

"Okay," she said nonchalantly as though he'd asked if she'd like another cup of coffee.

"I'd prefer it." he finished.

'Don't ask. You don't need to know. Let it go Sall. Don't humiliate yourself any further, you already know the answer...don't ask...don't ask.'

"Why?" asked a tiny voice from the huddled, pathetic form at the far end of the settee.

"I'm sorry Sall, but I need to be honest with you. I really like you, and you deserve so much more than being with a man who's ashamed to be seen with you."

"What do you mean?" she asked knowing all to well exactly what he meant.

"I've been taking a lot of stick from my friends and my brothers. It's hard Sall, I've tried not to let it bother me..."

She cut in on him. This time she *did* want to know why, but it was a different why from before. Her voice was hard. The bitter edge already pronounced in every carefully enunciated vowel.

"If I'm so ugly, why go to bed with me? I told you Paul. I told you I don't sleep around, that you were special to me. That it meant something. That *you* meant something dammit. Why did you do that Paul? You promised you wouldn't hurt me." Her voice held a whining note now and she hated herself for it.

"If I'm so fucking ugly why did you sleep with me?" She yelled this at him across the room, each spat word coated with anger and hurt.

"I'm so sorry Sall. I know I shouldn't have done. I knew at the time I shouldn't have done it. But Christ Sall, I'm a weak man. When I've had a drink my dick wants sex. Any man will tell you Sall when you get horny after a pint it's so hard to think straight and be sensible..."

Again she cut in on his next words. "Your dick wants sex? Is that all it was? Hell, not even *you* the person wanted sex, just your dick? Is that all I was to you?"

"Yes." he said in a small voice. "I want to be honest. I'm sorry."

"Honest? Fucking Bastard, honest? I think it's a bit late in the day for honesty don't you? **Get out! You make me sick.**"

He looked at her once on his way to the door. It could have been a look of apology, but Sally saw it as a look of disgust mixed perhaps with a bit of pity.

"Get out!" she screamed and he went gratefully. He couldn't get out of the house fast enough.

She cried for a long time, and maybe if the J's had been in things would have been different. As the tears fell she battled with herself not to do it, but the pull was too

strong. The feelings too raw, the pressure too great, the need too much.

She walked up the stairs in a daze. Words going round and round in her head. Feelings swelling and pulsing, threatening to suffocate her.

She looked at the razor blade in her hand for a long time.

It had been so long. So damned long since she had felt the thin flat piece of steel between her fingers. Fifteen years since the last time and nearly all of the scars had faded away to nothing. She didn't need to cry anymore, she was going to have the satisfaction of getting rid of the evil, tainted, ugly blood.

She winced and it felt good as she drew the blade across the flesh of her thighs, her belly, her breasts. Not deep enough to do any serious damage, if she was very lucky not even deep enough to leave permanent scars but, deep enough to allow the dirty trapped blood its freedom.

As she drew the blade over her skin, parting her flesh again and again in her need for release, she repeated the same phrase, very softly over and over.

"Ugly girl. Ugly girl. Ugly girl."

REVIEW: CHRISTOPHER – "WER NEXT PROJEKT"

By Mike Ventarola

Wer Next Projekt was an item I obtained from the pledge drive at WFDU earlier this year. After hearing it, I immediately contacted Bob Westphal at WFDU and thanked him profusely for sending such a darkly delicious piece of work. Christopher wrote, performed, mixed and produced all the songs on this CD. No easy feat assuredly. The ear for details are not in vain as this is a product worthy of dark music fans everywhere.

Nokturne has an almost dark tribal feel to it. It takes us to a garden of madness under a moonlit night in a forsaken area. The female vocals on this track are sublime, bordering on the style of the late Ofra Haza, but sadly no credit is mentioned here who it may be. *Wakeuplove* utilizes Middle Eastern drones and once again, some background female vocals that are similar in style to Miriam Stockley of Adieumus. Here we are pleasantly delivered into the vocal skills of Christopher. He takes this song and creates such a sensuous atmosphere that it is a marvel that a label hasn't signed him yet. This guy CAN SING!!

Fall Into It transfuses some almost Scottish elements with the dark layered rhythm, which seem to float upon the murky waters of the mind. As the intensity of the lyrics increases, we are given a drum fiesta and a female chorus of almost ecstatic singing, followed by deep drones and a guitar driven rift of intensity. *Between Love & Lucidity* begins as a slow ballad with choruses that hint at Middle Eastern and Celtic influences. The percussion slowly builds to a sweeping seductive lilt making this a song of romance and seduction. This track is PERFECT for those into Kama Sutra and Tantric lovemaking.

Un Joi picks up the pace a bit with a world beat over dark electronic effects and a male female harmonized chorus. Celtic influences arise to carry the vocals along on a dreamy cloud. *Waiting for Pussy...Willow* starts with a lone female voice echoing in a cavernous setting. The guitar and electronic drones come forward, giving this track a sense of heat and intensity. There is a macabre element woven underneath making this all work out beautifully. *Not There Anymore (for N)* segues from the previous track. Christopher chants notes in an almost exalted state. There is a sense of bittersweet southern spiritual music at the base layer of the song, with liberating high notes delivered electronically. One of the most spiritual tracks to come out of the dark underground without having to utter a word.

You're So Sexual is a myriad of intense Middle Eastern flavor and modern goth rock and electronics. This track lives up to its name and squeezes sensuality from everywhere. The vocals are nothing short of fetishly intense, daring us to set our bodies free. *Concubine Crush Factor 8* has a Middle Eastern vocal drone at the intro that flows with the similar style and passion as Dead Can Dance. Various female voices come from the spectrum, each one more enticingly seductive than

the next. *What Is Your Threshold For...* is the most haunted track on the CD. There are elements of dread, macabre, uncertainty and fear. This builds to an explosive goth jazz style hybrid that is unique and very well done.

Had I not received this CD as part of the aforementioned WFDU pledge drive, I would have run out to purchase a copy. I urge you to do the same. If you like Dead Can Dance, you will love Christopher. Very few artists actually make CD's that are fully conducive for lovemaking, but this CD just reeks with sensuality. The only down side is that Christopher didn't sing on nearly enough tracks. His vocals are along the lines of Gossamer, Flowers and Machines and even Lestat. There is no denying that his voice was trained with many years worth of practice.

Regardless of your sexual orientation or lack thereof, Christopher has a way to make you feel things. Each intonation is meant to stimulate a certain cerebral response, and we the listeners only gladly follow along. The only other drawback is not knowing who the delightfully talented female singer is on this recording. She, like Christopher, transcends the brain responses to pull you in her siren's lair. Many bands have been compared to Dead Can Dance, however, Christopher comes closest to their brilliance and ingenuity than any of the others. This CD is highly recommended, and one is encouraged to seek out a copy any way that they can.

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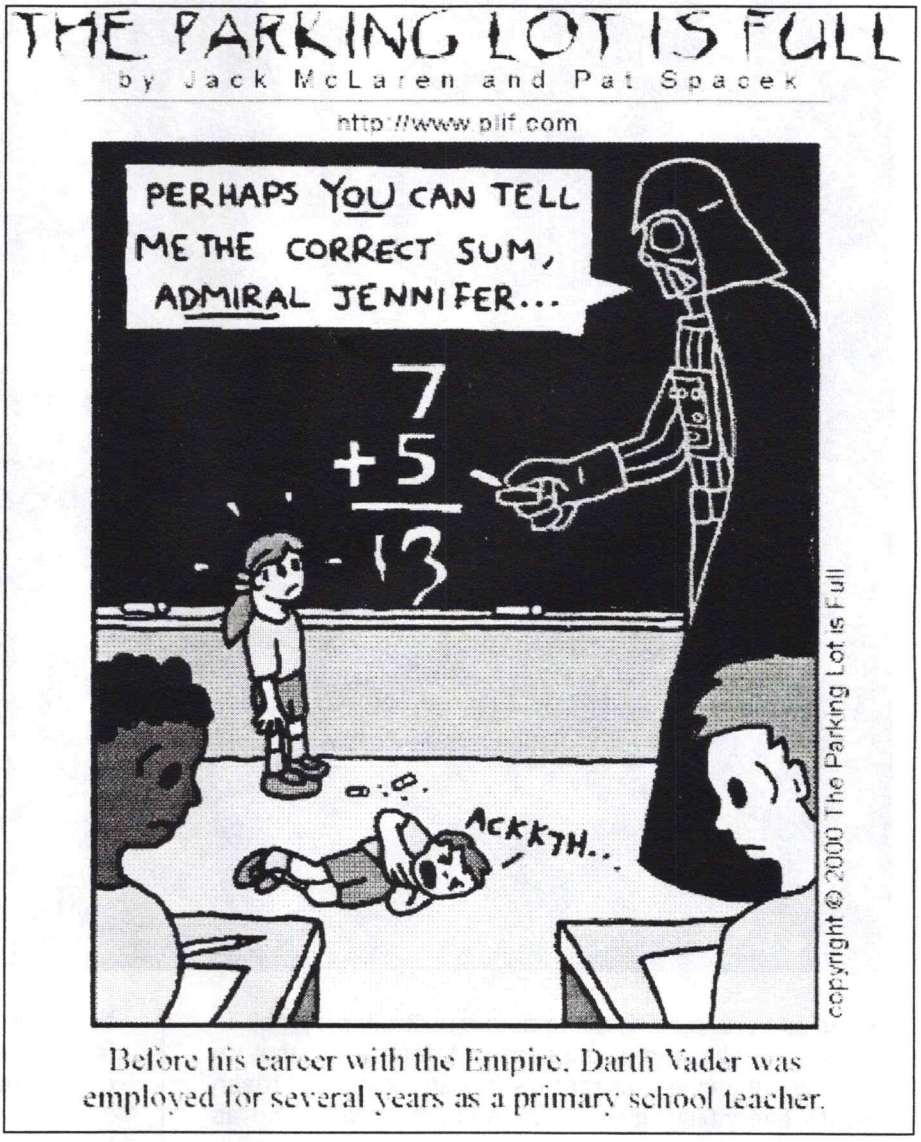
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Before his career with the Empire, Darth Vader was employed for several years as a primary school teacher.

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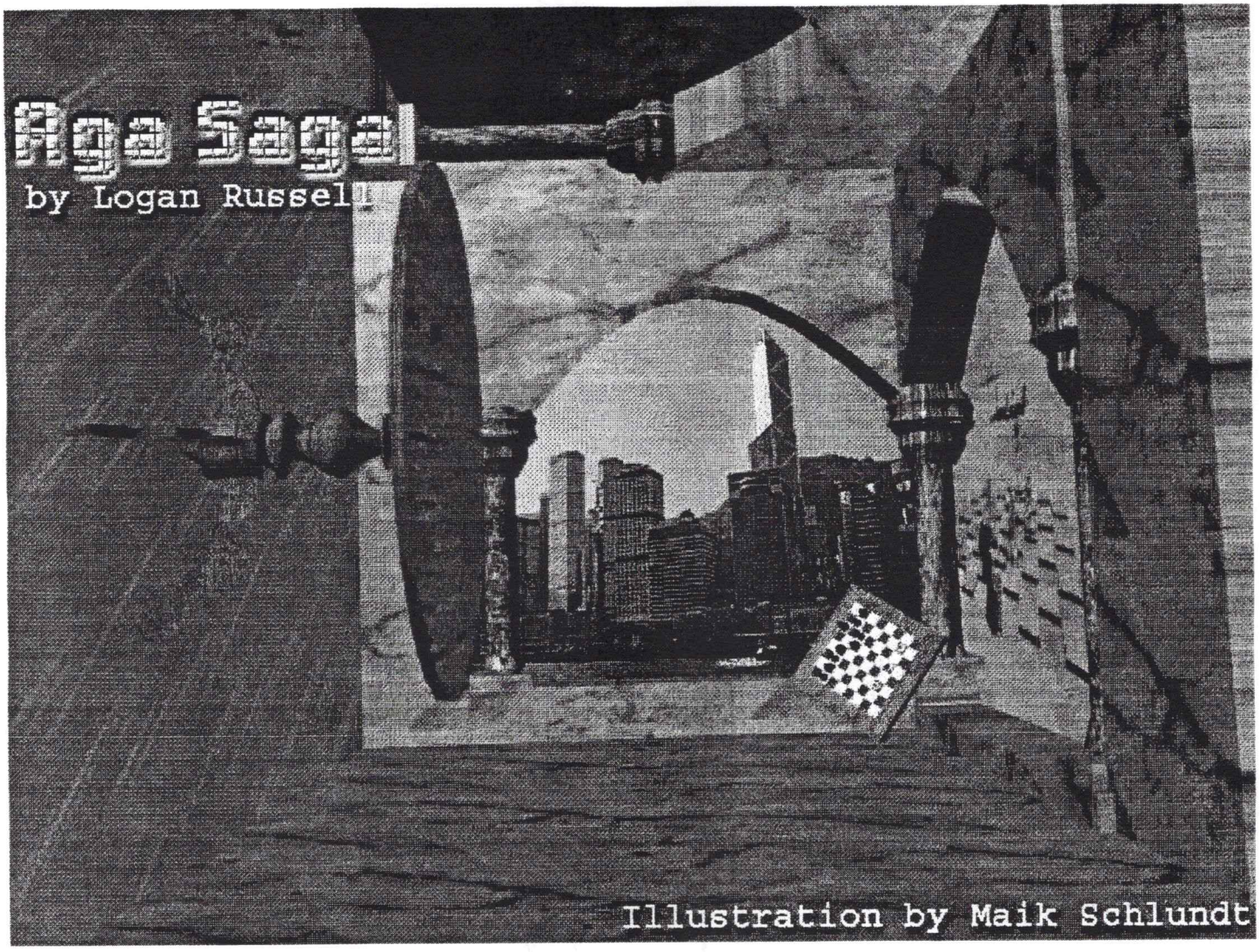


I often sit here, quietly, doing nothing but drinking it all in. You see, my kitchen is just perfect. I don't mean that it's a functional kitchen, or that it's a pretty kitchen, I mean that it's everything. It's perfect. And I'm as surprised as anyone.

Waltham St. Lawrence, where I live, is also perfect, but that's beyond my control. It's leafy, peaceful, strictly green-belt. Redbrick houses nestle behind elegant weeping willows, and there's hardly a car here that isn't a Jaguar or a four-wheel-drive, and all of them are dark blue or dark green. It's the kind of place where there's still a general store, and satellite dishes are widely believed to be the work of the devil. We're all very happy here, or if we're unhappy we certainly keep it to ourselves.

My kitchen looks stunning today. The April sunshine is streaming through the cathedral windows onto the maple end-grain worktops. There's a blue gingham tea-towel folded over the edge of the massive Belfast sink, and a beautiful bunch of daffodils in a pale blue jug on the table at which I'm sitting. It's like a scene from an interior design magazine.

It's warm in here. It's always warm in here, thanks to my pride and joy; the heart of the kitchen. The solid-fuel, four oven, traditional cream Aga. Jeremy wanted a royal blue one, but I stuck to my guns, and by jingo I was right to do so. It's made the kitchen complete. Like I said; perfect.

You see, normally, I'm hopeless. I really am a bit of a tit when it comes to fitting in and doing things right. Jeremy was born and raised in somewhere very much like Waltham St. Lawrence so he fitted in right away. He could lapse instinctively into talk of gymkhanas, clay-pigeon shooting and Range Rovers. I couldn't. I always felt a little gauche and out-of-place. I know that Jeremy was often a little bit embarrassed by me back then.

It's four years since we bought this house, and I can't remember how many mistakes I've made with it. The house is my area of responsibility, but perhaps I wasn't qualified to be let loose in a rambling seven-bedroom pile as my first major project. The trouble is I'm too impressionable. I start something - or rather, I get the decorators to start something - then change tack completely with the next magazine I buy, or the next showroom I visit. The result would be an utter riot of ideas. At least, that's how it used to be.

Take, for example, the corner bedroom. It's a gorgeous room overlooking the back garden on one side, and open farmland on the other. There's a huge weeping willow just outside, which slaps at the windows when the wind is really strong. When we bought the house, it was all slate blue and oppressive. Very much in need of brightening up, so I set about my task with vigour. First I decided on a fresh, dewy green for the walls, rather to tie in the splendid willow tree outside, in summer at least; in winter it would simply help to brighten the room. Gosh, I was clever. I must admit, though, that I hadn't really thought much beyond the colour. I had some vague idea about spriggy curtains and pine furniture, but it was all very nebulous, and nothing had been bought. But I'd have plenty of time to decide things like that whilst the decorator was doing the walls.

Our decorator was recommended to me by the Vicar's wife - yes, Waltham St. Lawrence is like that - I bumped into her in the post office ages ago, and she keenly spotted a great streak of white emulsion in my hair.

'Goodness Megan,' she boomed, 'Don't tell me Jeremy has you doing the buildings maintenance yourself eh?'

I'm sure I blushed. I told you I didn't really fit in back then - it had just never occurred to me to hire somebody. It's not that we couldn't afford it, it's just that I wasn't brought up like that.

'Oh,' I mumbled, 'no it's just from one of those matchpot things, I can't decide what colour to do the hall.' This was a lie. The hall, at that very moment was breathing a huge sigh of relief as I'd just painted over my experimental burnt sienna rag-rolling effect, with a rather safer white.

'Well, I can recommend a chappie if you need one, he did all of the Vicarage.' She said this as if there were no better recommendation a painter could have. I'd been in the vicarage, and it was goose-shit green throughout. Still, I hadn't noticed any flaws in the paintwork. 'I'll pop his card through your door,' she went on, 'what's his name? Drat! Can't think of it. He goes by some kind of nickname.' She clicked her meaty fingers whilst trying to remember, it sounded like somebody snapping logs in half. 'It's on the tip of my tongue...Domino, no...Dynamo, no...Dildo. DILDO. That's it, Dildo Dave. He's very good.'

Well, yes. He sounded good I had to admit. Quite adventurous even, for a decorator. Linda, behind the counter, caught my eye for one frantic instant, then looked away quickly, apparently having to urgently count the newspapers on the counter. Later that day, a note indeed came through the door. It said:

Dildo Dave
670881
Best
Agnes

Minutes after the note was delivered, there was a knock at the door. I opened it to find Linda from the post office standing there in gales of laughter. I'd never spoken to her before, beyond the occasional 'hello,' so this was odd. She spluttered and hooted for a while longer. Suddenly I realise that this must be another commuter-belt custom I was unaware of...Glad of my quick thinking, I joined in before it was too late.

'Heeeeyaaaah Haaaaaah Haaaaagh.' I started, and this seemed to make Linda laugh even more, so it was obviously the right thing to do. Eventually, after we'd had a good old chortle - I'd warmed to my part so much that I was positively bow-legged with mirth - she was able to speak.

'I had to tell you,' she panted, 'in case you made a fool of yourself. It's Dado Dave, not Dildo Dave.'

'Oh I see!' I howled. 'Yes. That would have been embarrassing.' We chuckled a little more at this, eventually Linda was up to another sentence.

'What were you laughing at?' she asked, smiling.

'Eh?'

'Just now, something really tickled you.'

'Oh. That. Funny poem on Radio 4.' I hoped to God that she couldn't hear Capital FM blaring out from the kitchen.

'Oh.' She looked disappointed.

'Fancy a drink?' I asked brightly. I was sensing a non dyed-in-the-wool Waltham St. Lawrence type person in Linda, and wanted to check my theory. 'Reckon the sun's gone over the yardarm yet?' Why was I speaking as if this were one of the colonies?

'Somewhere in the world at least.' She grinned.

'Come through to the Drawing Room.' *Drawing Room?* What the hell was wrong with me?

We both sat down, and began to chat. After a short while I remembered that I didn't have a little cocktail-wallah cringing in the shadows, and nobody was going to get us Pink Gins, or Singapore Slings or anything like that. I fixed G&T's myself.

A couple of Gins later, we were best of friends. Our respective husbands and children had been discussed, diets trashed and two tubs of Haagen Daaz consumed. Both of us glad to have found someone who didn't quite buy into the whole Waltham St Lawrence scene. I hoped I'd see her again soon.

A couple of years later, Linda and I were still great pals, and as I waited for Dado Dave to arrive to paint the corner bedroom, I wondered which room I should tackle next. The kitchen was really a disgrace...maybe I should have a go at that.

Dave arrived, and I showed him up to the corner-bedroom. 'All the paint is there.' I said, as if a painter might be unable to spot six paint cans in an otherwise empty room. He gave me a look that might have been trepidation, and opened one of the cans. 'Christ,' he muttered, and quickly shut it again. He opened it one more time as if to confirm, then said, 'Have you actually opened these? This is...it's...', he tailed off, lost for what 'it' might be.

'It's Spring Sapling,' I helped him out. 'It's going to *draw* in the willow from outside.' I declared loftily.

He opened the can a third time and glanced at the willow, frowning. 'You sure? Sure this isn't going to be like your purple dining room that I had to paint magnolia straight away?'

'It was aubergine,' I said pettishly, 'and no, Spring Sapling will *make* this room.'

I swept out, into my car and off to a few furniture shops. When I got back, I had ordered a beautiful mahogany chiffonier, which would look lovely with a big blue and white bowl and jug combination on top. On their way too, were a mahogany sleigh bed and wardrobe. Dave had already left for the day, so I checked his progress. Spring Sapling looked a hell of a lot brighter on the wall than on the paint chart. Still, it would probably look completely different after the second coat was on.

It didn't. But that was only because there was so much *wall showing. Probably when the furniture was in and the* curtains were up, it would look fabulous. The furniture was due to arrive the next day, Jeremy was back from Brussels the day after. What a transformation he'd see.

The furniture helped a bit, and if you half shut your eyes, it actually looked quite nice. I decided to show it to Linda first, to gauge her reaction.

'Bloody Hell!' She said. 'You're certainly brave with your colours, aren't you? What colour is this, highlighter pen?'

'I'll grant you, it's bright. But you have to admit that it freshens the room, don't you?' Maybe I needed more paintings on the walls. Big ones, and lots of them.

'Freshens...yeeees. This is a guest room isn't it? You haven't just redecorated Felicity or Jeremy-Junior's room while they're off at boarding school have you?'

I'd rather hoped for a better reaction, but I'd wait and see what Jeremy had to say when he got home. As soon as he got in, I made him put his hands over his eyes, and marched him up there. 'Ta-daah!' I said, pulling his hand from his eyes.

He was silent for a moment, then, 'Oh my shitting fucking God. What have you done?'

Golly. Wasn't quite what I was hoping for, but he wasn't done yet.

'That colour? With classical furniture? Looks like pensioners at a Rave!' He laughed indulgently, then his brow furrowed a little and he punched me hard in the ribs. Cracked one actually. Bloody hurt too, I can tell you. Trouble with a cracked rib, you see, is that there's not a lot you can do about it, you just have to leave it to knit, and that can take ages, I should know.

'Why the hell do you make such a hash of everything Meg? Why can't you have just one idea, and stick to it? I've been travelling for four hours. Four fucking hours, and I have to come home to this...this carnage!'

Ooof! Bit of a wallop to the kidney that time and *Timber!* Down I went. I must have hit my head on something - probably the chiffonier - because my head seemed to be bleeding, which was jolly annoying, it was a new carpet.

I lay there for a while, long after Jeremy stalked out of the room. He was quite right, it really was a dreadful colour. I'd call Dave later.

Oh yes. That's the other thing you see. Our marriage wasn't perfect. On the surface it was, of course. Jeremy was the successful late thirty-something chap, with ever-so-slightly receding dirty-blond hair, and faded-denim blue eyes. I was the mid thirty-something stay-at-home

wife with the peaches-and-cream complexion and the well-she's-had-two-children figure. Felicity and Jeremy Junior - Fliss and JJ, both approaching their teens - were the beautiful children we'd produced, and Harvey was the overweight, crotch-bucking Labrador that justified the green wellies in the back of my Range Rover. Yes - we had it all, including, in Jeremy's case, a sharp right-hook.

The funny thing was, I didn't even mind. I did love Jeremy and I know that he loved me, and when you looked at everything that I had, the odd beating didn't dent the old equation too badly. I never complained or fought back, and I never spoke of it to anyone else. As I've said, that's just the way Waltham St Lawrence is.

The corner-bedroom was duly repainted in a lovely butterscotch colour that Jeremy chose. Time marched on, the kids came back from boarding school for the summer, and I decided to embark on the kitchen, which was in serious need of an overhaul.

It seemed like a long summer. It was a mistake, in retrospect, to start on the kitchen while the children were home - it was just an added complication. Jeremy had little patience with them, especially JJ who hero-worshipped him and trailed him everywhere trying to find new ways to be like him. The house was in perpetual dusty chaos. A more substantial workforce than simply Dado Dave was required, and their work had to be done in a certain sequence, and why do they never turn up when they say they will? It was frustrating and a little depressing.

I'd decided to heed Jeremy's advice when it came to decorating the kitchen. I had one vision for it. 'Traditional country kitchen' was my goal, and by golly I was going to stick to it this time. It just took a hell of a lot longer when you were so single-minded about everything, and didn't just buy the first type of worktop or tap you liked the look of. No, I was an artist at work here, working to a plan.

It was going well though. Even Jeremy seemed to approve of everything that I had chosen.

'Tell you what, Meg-peg,' he said to me one evening, when Fliss and JJ were in bed. 'After the kids are back at school, why don't we have a holiday? You could do with a break from the kitchen - should be nearly done by then - and it'd be nice to spend some time together. What do you say?'

I missed a beat. Why did he have to exclude the children before he could get enthusiastic about anything? But, it was a nice thought, and he *was* thinking of me. 'Great.' I said brightly. 'Where do you fancy?'

He answered immediately, he'd obviously been thinking about this for some time. 'What about Las Vegas? You've always wanted to go. Perhaps we could hire a car and drive to the Grand Canyon. A groovy little convertible maybe, try to recapture our lost youth?' He nudged me playfully.

'I wouldn't say I've *always* wanted to go to Las Vegas, I just said it looked like fun when Friends was on the other day.' I'd always wanted to go to St. Lucia.

'Oh come on, it'll be fun. Maybe we could pop up to New York for a couple of days' shopping too.'

That did it. I'm a sucker for a shopping trip. 'Let's have a drink to celebrate.' said Jeremy, and wandered off to the kitchen, swearing under his breath as he manoeuvred around the eight metres of worktop and assorted cupboard carcasses that were piled up in the hall. When he returned he had two mighty brandies and an Aga catalogue that I'd left on the hall table. 'This is nice,' he said, indicating the catalogue. 'Is this what you're getting for the kitchen?'

Blimey, normally my decorating ideas got me a rabbit-punch; this period of *Glasnost* in our home was nice but a little unsettling.

'Lovely shade of blue,' he went on.

Ah, he was on the wrong page. 'No - I circled that one because it's the model I want - the four-oven one. I'm going to order the Traditional Cream, it's on the next page.'

He flipped over, then flipped back. 'I like the Royal Blue better.' And thus we reached an impasse. My choice was clear. Order the cream, and get a jolly good hiding; order the blue, and have a quiet life. But hang on, Meg, weren't you working to a *vision* here. Traditional country kitchen. That's right, and nothing was going to deviate me from my vision. That's what always happened, and that's why half our house looked, frankly, shit. Roaring with confidence from the brandy, and my belief in The Vision, I pressed on.

'I'm doing what you said. I'm sticking to an original concept. I like the blue as well,' - I didn't, I hated it. - 'But the traditional colour for the Aga is cream, and I'm going for a traditional English look. Actually, the Royal Blue was only introduced for Agas in 1997.' Crikey, I did have the facts at my fingertips didn't I?

A ghost of a smile flickered on his face. 'Traditionally English? But the Aga was a Swedish invention and was sold there first. My sweet.'

'Really? Yes, but...but...' All those years in the school debating society clearly paying off. Damn his trivia retention.

'But...but,' he mocked, good-naturedly. 'I like the blue better.'

It was a perfectly civilised exchange, but I knew now that the immense kitchen project had just sailed slap-bang into an iceberg, was critically hulled, and was listing dangerously. But the band was still playing, and life goes on.

I know what you're thinking now. You're thinking 'Oh come on Meg. Calm down old girl, it's an oven. Stop being such a drama-queen and get it in perspective.' But you're wrong, it was much more than an oven now, it was a decision about the rest of my life. I'd decided to work to a vision. I'd decided that nothing would distract me from my original idea, indeed Jeremy said that's what I ought to do. I could order a blue one, I could, but it would mean rolling over and giving in. Not to mention compromising The Vision. Or I could stand up to him, for once, and order the cream. In Waltham St Lawrence terms, this is fighting talk.

Well, talk is fine and dandy but actions are different and I'm a yellow-belly at heart. I took the path of least resistance, and ordered neither. Playing for time until I felt able to face the consequences of either decision.

Time passed. The absence of any shade of Aga wasn't an issue, as the kitchen wasn't ready for it anyway. I told Jeremy it was being handmade somewhere. 'Telford,' he informed me. Christ, had he been reading up? I'm sure he was quite certain that a Royal Blue one was on its way. Quite frankly I'd been beginning to lose my nerve, I'd found myself on several occasions staring at the picture in the catalogue, and trying really hard to like it.

Fliss and JJ went back to school. I'm always tearful for a while after they leave - I miss them dreadfully - so I was really quite glad when it was time to pack up and head for Las Vegas. I must confess to even feeling a tingle of excitement as the aircraft banked, dipping its wing theatrically to reveal the brilliant jewelled streak that is the Las Vegas Strip.

Las Vegas is insane from the moment you arrive until the moment you leave. Maccaran airport is itself halfway to being a casino. There are slot machines everywhere, and glass-eyed punters happily throwing quarter after quarter into them. 'Jesus!' muttered Jeremy, as he took in the scene. I hoped to God things were going to improve. I couldn't face five days of him hating *everything*.

We picked up our hire car - a bright red Mustang - and that seemed to cheer him up a lot. We roared up the Strip to our hotel, and it was quite overwhelming. Nothing can quite prepare you for the scale of the place. It's huge, brash and gloriously tacky. At ten o'clock at night it was still incredibly hot, and very busy. I couldn't help thinking how much Fliss and JJ would have loved it. I, on the other hand, felt distinctly home-counties in the middle of it all. No Agas here, I'd bet.

Las Vegas was not a success. I was prepared to make the best of it and, as usual, I found myself having to chivvy Jeremy along. I had to be all bright and full of ideas to try and make sure he stayed out of the bad mood that he seemed inexorably drawn toward. Gosh, I organised, I chattered, I booked us a helicopter flight over Las Vegas by night, I booked a show, I was the life and soul and by day three, I was knackered. There's only so much fruitless gambling you can do, and apart from the odd excursion, there's really not that much else to do in Vegas.

On day four I stayed in bed. Couldn't face another day of forced jollity. It was beginning to seriously grate on me anyway. Who was making sure *I* had a good time? Who was making sure *I* was happy? It was all getting a bit one way. I flicked on the TV; Jeremy pulled a face. Ah yes, the person who was all for this American odyssey had since developed a healthy hatred of the place. It started a couple of nights ago, when we were standing at one of the hotel bars, talking to an American couple, who told us they'd never visited 'Yoorope' and never wanted to. It was an innocent comment, but Jeremy quickly took it on board and nursed it until it grew into a major grievance. First it was just that couple that he loathed, then everyone in the hotel and now, as far as I could tell, everyone in the country.

The TV droned on in the background '...and thass what this country is all about. Thass what made this country great. Freedom of speech. This is a Free Country. I'm'a tell you what else too. First-of-all, this is the greatest country in the world, and seckind-of-all, thass why ever-one wants to live here.' This statement by an audience member on the Sally Jessy Raphael show brought rapturous applause. Quite a different reaction from Jeremy though.

'Jesus Fucking Christ,' he exploded. 'Can't they string one sentence together?' I felt it wise not to point out that *Jesus Fucking Christ* was not exactly the Queens English either. 'Who the fuck do they think they are? They think they're so fucking patriotic with their flag-waving and I-pledge-allegiance shit. Christ. They haven't a clue. They really think that the rest of the world is backward don't they? Like we're all living in oppressive communist states and don't know what democracy is?

Jesus. They're so arrogant. Gah!' Yes, he actually said *Gah.*

I just looked at him. I didn't know what he wanted me to do about it. This really wasn't something I could fix and anyway, I was pretty sure it wasn't my fault. I couldn't think of anything to say either, so I just turned the TV off for fear that it would spout more inflammatory rhetoric. I just felt tired. It was only five in the afternoon.

'Let's get out of here, Meg-peg,' he said, after a long silence. 'As JJ would say, I'm being a real shithead. I think it's this place,' he indicated Las Vegas, out of the hotel window. 'I think it brings out the worst in me, and you deserve better. How about if we just get in the car and drive. There's got to be somewhere else we can stay. Maybe we can get as far as the Grand Canyon tonight, and stay in a lovely little quiet hotel. What do you say?'

Yes, what *do* you say, Meg-peg? Do you say *Good idea Jezzer, let's go. Let's forget the fact that it was you that wanted to come here in the first place. Let's forget that I've been trying to make it fun as if you were three years old. Let's forget that I'm knackered. Let's ignore that 'you deserve better' comment too shall we? Let's not pretend that it's anything to do with me. We're leaving because you made a mistake and you're bored.* Or do you say, *OK.*

'OK,' I said, then added, 'let me just have a shower first.'

In the shower I seethed quietly. I was losing myself here. My identity was becoming completely swallowed up by the marriage-monster. I was becoming a human zero. I clung to the image of the traditional cream Aga that I was too scared to order, and resolved to do something about it as soon as we got back.

By the time I'd had my shower, packed, and then had something to eat it was beginning to get dark outside. Jeremy was hugely pleased with himself after he didn't tip the valet parking boy, opting instead to tell him to go fuck himself, before roaring off the hotel forecourt, the Mustang's tyres squealing in embarrassment.

Given that it was dark and given that Jeremy was in a bad mood and didn't know where the hell he was going, it was no surprise at all to me that within fifteen minutes we were comprehensively lost. Apparently, this was because of a lack of fucking roadsigns.

'Well, stop at a shop and I'll nip in and get a map.' I said, as anyone with half a brain would.

After much gear-crunching, tooth-grinding, and a last ditch attempt at finding a sign that said 'Grand Canyon with attendant tranquil oasis-type hotel, thisaway' Jeremy screeched to a halt in a parking lot by some shops. A 7-11 was open. I trudged in checking my shorts pocket for spare dollars. I bought a map. In the light of the shop, even the most cursory of glances revealed the route that we should take - Highway 93 which would take us right over the top of the Hoover Dam, and then we'd be out of Nevada, into Arizona and right on the Southern rim of the Grand Canyon. It really was quite simple.

I rounded the corner to the car, and froze. There, with a gun to Jeremy's head, was a huge black man.

'Gittin the car. Bitch,' he said.

Jeremy spoke in a small voice. 'Give him the credit cards Meg, they're in your bag, and any cash you've got.'

Oh thanks Jeremy, I thought, *thanks a lot*. Let our attacker know who's holding the treasure, why don't you. Then I realised something. I realised I wasn't scared. For the first time in years, I wasn't scared of something, even though this was the most dangerous situation I'd ever been in. I felt quite serene.

'Give me the money you motherfucking bitch, or I'll blow his head off.'

See, I wasn't upset at being called a bitch, even a motherfucking one, because I'd been a bitch and a cunt and a whore for years according to Jeremy. I wasn't scared of the gun, because it was pointed at Jeremy, and I didn't think it would make much sense to move it from its position against his temple. Best of all, I wasn't scared of Jeremy, because, well because someone had a gun to his head and you could see just what a ratty little coward he was.

'Actually,' I addressed our assailant, thinking on my feet, 'can we talk?' I glanced around; the parking lot was deserted. I was rather uncomfortable about not knowing exactly where we were, but...in for a penny...'What can I call you?'

'GET IN THE FUCKING CAR. GIVE ME THE MONEY.'

I read the lettering on his hat; it was pulled down close over his eyes. I couldn't really see much of his face as it was largely in shadows. All I could see was that he was very, very tall and the gun looked very, very real. 'I'll call you Tommy then. Tommy, I'm Meg.'

In his seat, Jeremy whimpered.

'Oh shut the fuck up,' I barked. It felt good. 'Tommy, it's like this. I'm rich. I can give you money-'

'I'll blow his fucking brains out.' Repeated Tommy, wisely lowering his voice.

'Yes. Good. That's what I wanted to talk about. Um, this is all a bit last minute, and I'm new to this, but I've just had a thought. Do you normally end up killing someone in these situations? Because if you do, I'd rather like it to be him.'

'What the hell are you playing at? Are you craz-' Jeremy abruptly shut up when Tommy jammed the gun tighter against his temple. Then he wet himself. It appeared that I had Tommy's attention.

'We've got to be quick, I suppose.' I said. 'Think of it like this. I could give you some money, and you could go. Or I could give you lots of money, plus this car. If you just don't hurt me, and leave me with the cell phone. Now, I know what you're going to say. Why should you do anything I say? Well, let's look at your options. Run now? We could both identify you. Shoot us both? The first gunshot will attract attention, and people will be looking out of their windows before the second is even fired. But you get him out of the car, get yourself in - sorry the seat's wet. Shoot him - and I mean stone dead - with the engine already running and be out of here in seconds. OK, so you'll have to ditch the car pretty sharpish, but I'll give you my cash and my credit cards. The blue one is nearly at its limit, so I'll report that stolen, don't use it. The others are all clear so you should get about twelve grand's-worth of spending done. I won't report them missing, I'll say I left them in England. Nobody will question the mistake. After all I'll be a confused widow by then. I'll say it was a white guy that shot asshole here,' I indicated Jeremy, lapsing quite easily into my Americanese, suspecting that it would annoy him as much as my plot to kill him. 'Two white guys with needle marks on their arms. Why should you trust me? Well, I'm in it up to my neck too now aren't I? If you go down, I go down. So it's vital that he's actually dead. What do you say, Tommy?'

I could see I'd convinced him. Crikey, I had some gumption all of a sudden, didn't I? Could it really be that Megan Tully from Waltham St Lawrence was bringing down some badass shit on the Westside of Vegas? Apparently so. Meg-peg was *in the hood* with her homeboy Tommy tonight.

It all happened pretty quickly after that. Jeremy and Tommy swapped places, the gun never leaving its mark. Once he was in the car, Tommy passed me the mobile phone. 'Wipe it,' he said, and I did. I had no interest in being able to trace him.

There was a moment's pause. Jeremy standing on one side of the car, me on the other, my accomplice in the drivers seat about to kill him. For an instant, Jeremy caught my eye.

'Why?' He asked.

'Because I want a traditional cream Aga, and there's no other way. Go Tommy!'

The BLAM! of the gun was insanely loud, and was followed by a screech of tyres as Tommy sped out of my life. 'Pleasure doing business with you.' I said.

Jeremy was quite dead. Much of his head was AWOL and was in fact sprayed over the wall behind him, and nobody can live like that.

I dialled 911, and then I began to sob. Huge shuddering sobs. It wasn't on purpose, I hadn't really thought that far ahead, but of course it did look good when people arrived at the scene, which seemed to happen very quickly. I was relieved that I could finally lay to rest all my fears and doubts. My children would not be beaten, as I had been. They would not grow up to be violent or to be victims of violence. I would no longer have to lie about bruises, cuts and broken bones. And all in all it had been a really topping wheeze. I couldn't feel any sorrow. I just felt the joy of being able to relax at last. If I could, I'd have bought a t-shirt that said 'I got widowed in Vegas!'

*****

You were right, earlier on, it *is* just an oven. *Now* it's just an oven, but only because it's cream. If it were blue it would be a whole lot more than that.

So that's my very own Aga saga. Life is good now. Fliss and JJ miss their father, of course, and I do too sometimes, but it's better this way. They're back here now for the holidays. When they each finish at their prep schools, I'll move them to a more local day school so they can live here, where they should be. JJ looks a little like his father, but not too much, and he's as gentle as a lamb.

I sometimes wonder how Tommy is getting on. I hope he's OK. I know that he spent nine grand on my credit cards, before the various companies contacted me questioning the change in spending habits. I hope he enjoyed every cent. It was well worth it.

I've played the grieving widow to the hilt, and it's given Waltham St. Lawrence something to talk about. I'm making a point of coming out of myself now. It's been six months and I'm allowing myself to be seen in the village wearing the occasional small, brave smile. Linda's been a brick, a really good friend. Often she comes round and

we sit in my kitchen. She doesn't try to patronise me, like all the busybodies here, she just comes round and chats, and sometimes she says how nice my kitchen is.

One Simple Dance

By Marcus Pan

Went to a wedding this past Friday. Mother-in-law's, actually (well, eventual mother-in-law anyway), and it wasn't too bad. Spent way too much time wondering if I was being mailbombed while I sat there making small talk with a few people (well, trying to anyway...I don't do well at familial events as it is...and I forgot to take off my nailpolish, woops). Infringed on my good time. But that's not important (and I wasn't bombed, by the way, this time).

The reception was nice. Food was decent. Bar was open (WOO!) and there was quite a bit of coffee which, needless to say, I enjoyed quite happily after stealthily commandeering and stealing from another table an entire full carafe. ;)

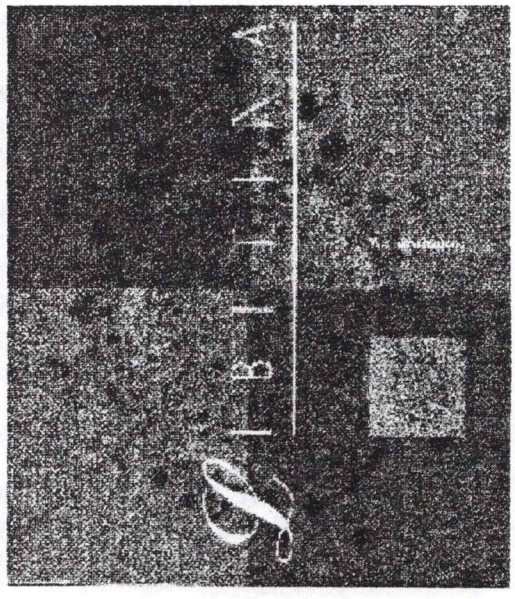
It was the first dance of the reception, you know the one. "Presenting Mr. & Mrs. Whosiewhatsits in their first dance together as husband and wife." And they did...quite well actually. For a few moments the band's horrible nature was forgotten. Then the maid of honor & best man did the same. There was only one other person left on the wedding party...it was a small wedding partie as most weddings go. That person was my stepdaughter, 7-yr-old going on 16, Sophia. And there was nobody to dance with her.

So she stood there on the side of the dancefloor...just watching. Everyone else seated around (it's the wedding parties' dance after all). Looking rather forlorn. Being rather uneasy at social functions and worrying about my current possible mailbombing situation, it was Laura who pointed it out to me. And the vision pained me. Poor girl, seven years old, just standing there by herself in a pretty dress. :(

So I fixed it. I got up and walked through a crowd of people I don't know save a few, took her hand, and danced with her. The forlorn expression gone, the twinkling eyes...and it was probably one of the best dances I had the pleasure of having.

REVIEW: Libitina – "Weltanschauung"

By Rat Bastard



A Closer Communion[1], the 1997 debut release from UK gothic rock band Libitina, showcased a variety of influences, directed by distinctive and energetic vocals (which occasionally exhibited a slight Rozz Williams influence). However, this album failed to truly impress me. While there were a few standout tracks, **A Closer Communion** simply didn't strike me as an excellent album overall (amusing Pulp parody/cover notwithstanding).

So, enter album #2 from Libitina, **Weltanschauung**. Despite my lukewarm reception on **A Closer Communion**, I was definitely looking forward to checking the new album out. After all, despite all of the problems with their first album, Libitina still struck me as a band with promise, and, as it turns out, **Weltanschauung** is an improvement over its predecessor in all aspects.

The sound of the new album is, essentially, a more refined version of the sound presented on the band's debut; solid gothic rock with an even blend of electronics and guitars. **Weltanschauung** is mostly an upbeat album, exhibiting both raw punk fervor and pop sensibility, shown most effectively in tracks like *War Paint* and *Thalatta Thalatta* (which was obviously made for the purpose of populating dancefloors).

[1] Reviewed in Legends #93, December 1999.

Though full of vitality, the vocals may, at times, grate on the average listener during more atonal moments (a manifestation of the aforementioned Rozz Williams, or perhaps early Danse Society, influence). There is also a token "What were they thinking?" track, *Virgins*, which appears to bridge the gap between EBM/Darkwave and death metal, though I'm not entirely certain as to the amount of appeal it will have to the average fan of either genre.

With **Weltanschauung**, Libitina has shown the world another piece of evidence supporting the allegation that there are, in fact, quality gothic rock acts still in existence and releasing new material. I heartily recommend at least one listening of this album to any fans of the genre, regardless of whether or not they are actively seeking evidence of this sort.

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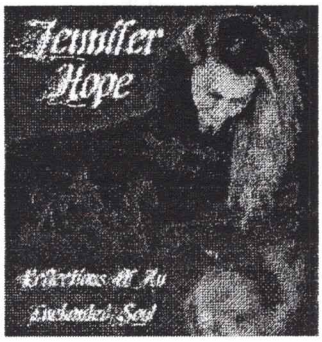
REVIEW: JENNIFER HOPE – "REFLECTIONS OF AN ENCHANTED SOUL"

By Marcus Pan



Amazing musician and artist Jennifer Hope returns to us with a second EP release, **Reflections of an Enchanted Soul**. As enamored as I was concerning her previous debut CD, **Winds of Tomorrow**[2], her latest work is more refined, subtle and quite beautiful. Following the release of **Winds of Tomorrow** in 1999, Jennifer's track *The Sky is Blushing* appeared on **The Unquiet Grave**, a phenomenal compilation from powerhouse of the genre Cleopatra Records.

Continuing her independent stance, **Reflections of an Enchanted Soul** is also released by her self-owned Mystic Dreams Music label. You can expect to find this and her pervious release at Middle Pillar, Metropolis, Seraph and other indie distributors worldwide. This go around the release was co-produced by Tomie Reeves as well as herself.

Jennifer is an amazing persona in music today, with wonderful musical arrangements and a far reaching collection of musical know how. From classical training on a wide variety of instruments to arranging and performing for many years. Her style is new age, ethereal and darker, though she put away a bit of the experimentalism she was toying with on **Winds**.

In her previous **Winds of Tomorrow** release, Jennifer had a tendency to clash musical aspects against one another to achieve an enigmatic and interesting sound. But this time around she reigns in the experimental tendencies and instead creates a smoother and more refined collection with **Reflections**. Her vocal range is far reaching and provides for a pleasant listening experience throughout. Fans of her previous work will find much to enjoy here. Rather than her voice standing out as much as it did in past music, here she combines it flawlessly with electronic and rhythm backgrounds. So instead it blends and joins with the instrumentals to create a dramatic sound.

From the moody *Exile* with subtle electronics and flowing synths combining flawlessly with her vocals, to the more moving and faster paced *Don't Leave Destiny*, both highlights to this six track EP. Jennifer is a solo act to watch and enjoy, for both aspects of physical and aural beauty. Her music is continuing to mature as her skills increase and her arrangements become more accurate, backed with classical learning but tempered with experience in the ethereal, darkwave and pop genres.

In short, **Winds of Tomorrow** was an excellent debut. However **Reflections of an Enchanted Soul** is a step upward, more mellow, comfortable and mature. It makes one wonder what Jennifer Hope can produce next, for if the history and track record is any

[2] Reviewed in Legends #103, October 2000.

indications, it should be sublime and wonderful.

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MP3: The Music Revolution

By Mike Ventarola

Well, the economy is pretty much in the toilet and about 80% of the people I know are already out of work. Needless to say, shopping is at an all time low, even for yours truly here. However in keeping with tradition of mentioning goth/underground businesses worthy of our hard earned and ever shrinking dollars, I will admit to a splurge at Middle Pillar. The guys at Middle Pillar continue to offer a wide variety of underground music that are practically impossible to get anywhere else. Service is always prompt, reliable and efficient. Check out the new material they have to offer at www.middlepillar.com.

While on the topic of internet music distributors, Projekt Records has released the third installment to Excelsis. These discs are commonly thought of as the "Goth Christmas Music" and are a wonderful diversion from all that happy, poppy stuff that we are force fed yearly around the holidays. The 3 CD's are also available in a box set, so get one for yourself if you haven't done so, or put it on the Xmas list for a dark clad friend for the holidays. Check out the great sales too at www.projekt.com.

For internet shows with Gothic Xmas music to replace those worn out traditional tunes that commercially plague us each year, you can also sample a number of songs at: http://stations.mp3s.com/stations/123/hidden_sanctuary_gothic_xm.html.

In other news, Dancing Ferret Discs has bought up the remainder of Isolation Tank, who were on the verge of bankruptcy according to rumors. Dancing Ferret is maintaining their site in order to offer the many Internet shoppers another vehicle for mail ordering underground music. For more information go to www.isotank.com.

HOT SCOOP!!

The Empire Hideous will be appearing LIVE after a 4 year hiatus at Albion Batcave, Saturday, January 19th 2002. Also playing will be Infidel, a band with an appeal to fans of Fields of Nephilim and Sisters of Mercy. Show starts at 10 p.m. Empire Hideous slated to play at 11 p.m.

Get there early because the crowds will be out the door on this one!! We need to solve the pressing question that lead singer Myke Hideous once asked: In a vote between Yodels or Ho-Ho's, which is better?

One for the Raspberry Department:

During the month of October, for the first time in MP3.com's history, a goth band actually made it to # 1 across the genres and also as # 1 hit MP3 music overall. The band, Midnight Syndicate, became the Internet darlings with their brand of cinematic spooky sounds.

The glory was somewhat marred though by some sour grapes who kept insisting something illegal went on to get them to that top spot. In actuality, it was a lot of hard work which accomplished this.

So for the doubting Thomas's who need some cheese to go with their wine, here is the scoop. Initially the folks at Heineken had contacted the band and picked the music in order to offer it as part of their online Halloween promotions. Furthermore, 60% of the stores that carried the Midnight Syndicate music also hung up the very darkly beautiful posters advertising their work. Toss in the fact that many major theme parks with haunted attractions (including two Busch Gardens, Universal, five Paramount parks, and a slew of Six Flags) utilized the music AND hung up posters promoting the site. So, call it a Raspberry, a Bronx cheer or just a good old pfffllltttzzzz from the tongue, they busted their ass to make it happen. I know, I was there! Check them out if you haven't already at www.midnightsyndicate.com.

Satellite's In Your Living Room!

Electronic artist, Satellite Dub, who hails from Falkirk, Central Scotland, has recently been spun into a whirlwind almost overnight! His track, "No Questions,"

reached No.1 on the electronic charts at www.garageband.com. Following on that success, this mild mannered artist was then contacted by the electronic giants, Philips, to utilize this very same track as part of an in-store demonstration CD for their new MP3 players. In addition, 20,000 of these discs will be shipped worldwide as part of the sales promotions, each carrying his music to the ears of the many consumers of the Philips product line. The song can be heard at www.mp3.com/satelitedub or at the artist website at http://www.satellitedub.com/.

Never standing still, Nilaihah Records just released, on November 13th, "Reincarnate" from Dissonance. This is a long awaited release which was produced by Lars Hansen of Oneiroid Psychosis.

The CD is rich with deep, female vocals merged with darkwave pop, creative hooks,
and amazing production. Also included is a cover of Eleanor Rigby (by the Beatles)
and remixes from Oneiroid Psychosis and Signal 12. A must have release from this talented duo who were first discovered by Paul Robb of Information Society.

See when the CD release party for "Reincarnate is happening near you at http://www.nilaihah.com/reincarnate.htm.

In Other Nilaihah News:

There is a sale special (through the end of 2001) on all T-shirts ordered directly from Nilaihah Records via credit card at http://www.nilaihah.com/catalog.htm or by check and money order. T-shirts are now only $13 within the US, and that includes shipping! Choose from Nilaihah Records, The Azoic, Fiction 8, in both t-shirts, and baby tees. Quantities are limited so get yours before their gone!

THE AZOIC: The Azoic's "Forward..." is still receiving much acclaim and club play all across the world. They are already working on new material and a remix of "Lost." Look for some other exclusive remixes to reveal themselves in the near future...

And if you're a die hard Azoic fan, you can now download your very own screen saver created by their amazing friend and fellow musician, Dave Scott. It's located at the bottom of the "Forward..." CD page (http://www.nilaihah.com/forward.htm).

Internet artist and film composure SINTZ is finishing up work on a complete soundtrack for the Contagion Pictures film "Dysphoria." More info can be found at www.contagionpictures.com. Not resting on his laurels, Sintz also just completed post production sound for the soon to be released film, "The Tunnel." Information can be found from a google.com search on the title for the film production co. Lots of good press on this one! He is also gearing up for post production incidental sound for "Still" from Road Dog Productions, search on road dog productions to get the film and director details.

Synthpop Addicts Take Note!

After a year of writing and recording, pre-orders for the phenomenal new Cosmicity CD "PURE" are being accepted for only $14! Still need some convincing? Check the free previews at http://www.ampcast.com/cosmicity. Find out more about "Pure" at http://www.cosmicity.com/pure.html to learn why Cosmicity is one of the outstanding artists on A Different Drum label.

AMPCAST: The Moses of The Indie Music World!

In light of the half penny deal from Universal-Vivendi owned Mp3.com, Ampcast has offered a lower sign-up rate and a higher pay back to artists who have unique downloaded tracks. Site owners Chris and Jim have been very considerate of the artists and their needs. Replies are prompt, problems are dealt with expediently, and artists can get their songs online within 20 minutes instead of waiting DAYS like on MP3.

Needless to say, many MP3 alumni have sought out this new site in the anticipation that the consideration and concern from the owners will continue to be reflected in the respect and service that they have shown thus far. The exodus of artists from MP3 is as mammoth as Moses leading his people out of Egypt. Seriously, that is how fast some artists are leaving MP3!

Recently, Ampcast added gothic, darkwave, EBM, synthpop and medieval to their genres, so stop by and tune in to some of the great work that folks have placed on line for your musical enjoyment. The site is located at www.ampcast.com. Hidden Sanctuary fans are directed to www.hiddensanctuary.com.

Currently there is a new dark label in town called Dark Future Music. They are offering the video "gothumentary" Sex, Death and Eyeliner as well as the soundtrack to the film as part of their premier launch. Having heard and reviewed the CD, I anticipate the film's arrival. Dark Future owners are the same folks who brought us that ever delightful Internet radio site Gothic

Radio, where fans across the world have tuned in in record breaking numbers. Check out their site at http://www.darkfuturemusic.com/.

For those of you who have a love-hate relationship with the popular US television game show, The Weakest Link, there is an online game available where you can exact your revenge on the host moderator all you want. Find it at: http://liquidgeneration.com/weakest_whack.html.

Literary Types Wanted!

If you are new to the scene or have been rather sheltered within the scene, you may want to investigate the wonderful Side-Line Magazine, http://www.side-line.com. This magazine also has a newsletter which keeps the discerning and hardcore fan alike abreast of all the music that is "happening" in the underground all across the globe. Here are some tidbits gleaned from their sources. If this doesn't convince you that you need this magazine to stay on top of the music news, nothing will.

From the Side-Line News List:
All promo-material should be sent to:
Side-Line music magazine
fao séba dolimont
90 rue charles degroux
1040 bruxelles - belgium
tel/fax 0032.2.732.14.81
sideline@ping.be
www.side-line.com

Yazoo cover album in the making
And cover albums stay very popular. "Nobody's Diary" is a Yazoo tribute CD being assembled by the team that brought you last year's OMD tribute, "Messages." The cover album set to be released in Spring of 2002 will be including contributions by Ganymede, Cosmicity, Soviet, David Mahr, and more. Four tracks on the CD will be reserved for "fan" versions of Yazoo songs. You may choose any song released or performed by Yazoo. All submissions must be on cd-r, un-mastered (not equalized). From all entries four songs will be chosen to be included on the CD set. All entries must be sent before the end of November to Ninthwave Records Lexicon PO Box 1734 Wheaton MD 20915 USA.
- Nobody's diary -
http://www.nobodysdiary.com

Marilyn Manson writing score "Resident Evil"
Marilyn Manson is to write the film score for the forthcoming "Resident Evil" movie. According to the singer, the music will be more electronic than his usual material. Manson is currently working on songs for his new album. The Resident Evil movie is based on the popular computer game of the same name. Milla Jovovich will star in the film as Alice, the Zombie Killer. The movie is due for release in the US in April next year.

New releases from Neue Asthetik
Neue Asthetik has several new releases coming up. First in the line is Judith's third full-length CD "Play of Light." Coming up next is Funhouse's first US release entitled "Oceans of Tears" which is somewhat of a "best of" for this Cult meets Mission meets Iggy psychedelic goth rock quartet. Third release on NA's schedule is Brickbats' "Monster Party." This was actually the first band to be signed to NAM and "Monster Party" was supposed to be the first CD released by the label. But due to complications the release was delayed roughly two years. And finally there's "Purge" by Holy Cow, bringing Goth/Industrial crossover mixed with a heavy dose of melodic experimental noise, deep and dark.
- Neue Asthetik -
http://www.asthetik.com

Perfidious Words live in Mexico City
The German duo Perfidious Words will play live in Mexico City on December 1st, 2001 at DADA X Club (Bolivar 31, 2nd floor, Centro Historico) presented by Metropolis Org. The tickets will be $12 USD/$120 Pesos (In advance/at the door). The band is a special guest for Strangemode's 8th Anniversary Party, the Official DM Fan Association in Mexico. Hopes are that the band will play new songs from their upcoming album. Do not hesitate the band's latest release that will surely please every Depeche Mode fan due to the close vocal similarity between Dave Gahan and PW's leadsinger!

Pet Shop Boys team up with Smiths guitarist
The Pet Shop Boys have finished recording their ninth album. According to EMI, the 11-track album will be released in March. In the meantime the duo are to release a DVD of their 1999/2000 tour on November 20th. The DVD will be titled "Montage" and will include footage from two nights in Germany, during their Nightlife world tour. It will also feature footage from shows on the US leg of the tour, plus promos for the duo's recent singles. The Pet Shop Boys are currently working on their new studio album, which is due for release next spring. The as-yet-untitled album will be the duo's first since 1999's Nightlife and has guitarist Johnny Marr playing on nine tracks, while percussionist Jodie Linscott appears on two.

Pre-order the Skinny Puppy DVD video collection
Although it was until now only available through Nettwerk, the Skinny Puppy "Video Collection" will now be released in Europe as well on DVD by SPV. The release date is set for November 26th. The DVD will feature every Puppy video from 1984 to 1992 with the

exception of "Worlock." You can now pre-order the DVD via Amazon.de, our partner in crime! In further news, you can read an interview with Skinny Puppy in our latest issue of Side-Line, n°37. For more info on what they had to tell, we refer you to the magazine itself, now on shelves at the best mail orders or right here at Side-Line where you get a free CD as well with your subscription.

Second CD best of Cure made for fans only
In an interview with the Belgian paper De Standaard, Robert Smith says that he only collaborated to the new 2CD compilation for the sake of the fans. Robert: "Personally, I was against the project to release yet another compilation album, we already had one you know. But since they were so keen on having one, don't forget that the label only has a limited right to the back catalogue, I rather preferred cooperating to get the best out of it than let them release a crap best of. Hence also the reason why we insisted on having a limited edition for the fans with an extra acoustic set."

First electro festival in Yugoslavia
Good news reaches us from Belgrade. DJ Zlaya reports us that on December 8th Yugoslavia will have its first electro festival at Student's Cultur Center in Belgrade. Bands that will perform are Wave Form (Belgrade), Endymion (Belgrade), Monoton (Belgrade), I'M (Nis/Belgrade), Black Sheep Screaming (Omoljica), Kinovia (Jagodina) and Alone In Heaven (Belgrade). The promotional "LFO sampler Vol. 1" is to be released this week and will include works of most of the bands. This release is only for promotional use, only a very small number of copies will be set for sale. The festival will also be recorded and released on CD. All interested Electro - Industrial labels, DJ's and Radio Shows should send their postal address in order to get a copy. The festival is organized by the Low Frequency Oscillation radio station team who is closely operating with Side-Line for news gathering. To hear Side-Line news in Belgrade, tune in on SKC Radio Belgrade 107.9 FM, every Friday from 23h PM to 2h AM with Alexandar Zec, DJ Zlaya, Nikola Vitkovic & Alexandar Kandic.
- LFO -
http://www.lfo.htmlplanet.com

Euro-Rock Indoor 2002 - line-up
FAD GADGET, REGENERATOR (1st time back in Europe since 4 years!), DANCE OR DIE, LIBITINA, ANGELS & AGONY, GREENHAUS, ACCESSORY, SUICIDE COMMANDO, TECHNOIR (1st time on Belgian soil!), SWARF, THE WOUNDED and WHISPERS IN THE SHADOW. Euro-Rock Indoors goes together with the Euro-Rock Preselections for which you can send your demos to: PI-Events, Bondgenotenlaan 130, 3000 Leuven (Belgium). As guest DJ's during this two-days-event no one else than the Belgian NIGHTBREED PARTIES will be spinning harsh tunes into the night!
- Euro-Rock Indoor tickets! -
http://users.skynet.be/sky82115/sl/shoppingtickets.htm
- Euro-Rock -
http://www.eurorock.be
- Nightbreed -
http://www.nightbreed.yucom.be

Backspace opens for VNV Nation and Icon of Coil
Detroit electro-industrial band Backspace is scheduled to open for Icon of Coil and VNV Nation on Friday November 23rd in Cleveland, OH. This will be Backspace's second performance at the Phantasy. They last performed in Cleveland with Das Ich and In Strict Confidence as part of the 1999 Totentanz Tour. The band's sound has been likened to Pulse Legion, In Strict Confidence, Cut.Rate.Box and the like. For more info visit the band's website
- Backspace -
http://www.digitalangel.com/backspace

Paralysed Age signed with Dancing Ferret
Dancing Ferret Discs announce that they have signed a worldwide deal with the newly-reformed German Goth band Paralysed Age. "Response to the label's USA-only release, "Empire of the Vampire," has created much new interest for the band, which has prompted them to record new material", says Patrick Rodgers from Dancing Ferret. The band's next album will be called "Into the Ice" and will be released in early 2002. Expect the same old-school style goth-rock with a hint of Cure influence. In further news, the band has apparently added a female vocalist who will sing on a number of songs as well.
- Paralysed Age -
http://www.paralysedage.de

Synthpop line-up known
The SynthCon 2002 event line-up is now known. The following artists will perform at the event: Beborn Beton, The Echoing Green, Freezepop, Hyper, Life Chain, Loveless, The Mourning After, No Comment, Norway2, Provision, Re:Course, S.P.O.C.K., T.O.Y., and Wave In Head. A limited number of specially discounted passes is now for sale. These passes will be sold at $55.00 for the three-day event. You will soon also be able to pre-order your SynthCon 2002 tee-shirts (available for pick-up at the event). So don't get caught without one this time around... Additionally, with the great surge in popularity of Synthpop in Spanish speaking countries, SynthCon are currently soliciting submissions from Spanish synthpop acts to fill out the 15th and final slot. Submissions will be open for approximately two weeks from the date of this release. Please contact SynthCon's booking agent, Jenz (jenz@synthcon.com). The Hollywood Roosevelt will be the official SynthCon hotel

again this year. SynthCon will also be hosting the American Synthpop Awards ceremony.
- SynthCon -
http://www.synthcon.com

There you have it! Check out Side-Line when you have a chance and keep the information flowing into Legend's Magazine so we can report right here, just for YOU!

REVIEW: THE FLESHPEDDLERS - "FALLING INTO A DREAM"

By Pat Hawkes-Reed (GothPat)

This is the Fleshpeddlers' third release, the second one with this line-up that includes Todd Milleacker, Kris Verplank and Scott Woodford. I suppose that the musical style could be described as 'indie-pop.' It's certainly not goth though at times it borders on industrial. At times the guitars grind, the keyboards sparkle, the synths dazzle, but it's still indie-pop. They describe themselves as "a garage band with synthesizers"...fair enough.

At first, I was groaning inside... "oh no, another bunch of guys with ironic t-shirts and ironic hair & ironic glasses" type band to suffer through, al la Weezer (no, there are no photos furnished, but this is a type of band I see all the time on MTV2).

But, I read the lyric sheet furnished and really listened. OK, I am a sucker for clever lyrics. This is why I love Sparks, Anthrax, Blue Oyster Cult and del Amitri – the lyrics. And this band has that...the sometimes weird, sometimes angst-filled words sung over quirky tunes. Words like:
"And I don't understand why she came to my door
Dressed up in leather and looking to score and the
Look in her eyes and those sultry lips, brought out
An honesty in me I could not resist when I said,
"I'm sorry, but you've got the wrong address..." "
(*Inflatable Dreams*)

"You're so happy, it makes me sick,
You're so happy, I can hardly deal with that
Crocodile smile, those walrus teeth,
I don't understand what you want from me."
(*Walrus Teeth*, which reminded me a bit of The Cure!)

So, give this band a listen if you like your music a bit off kilter, especially lyric-wise. I don't know if they tour at all (they are from Minnesota), but, if they do, could someone tell me if they look "ironic?"

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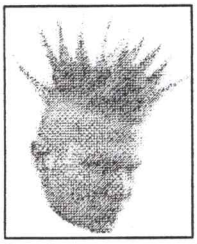
www.meanlittlesite.com Click Spaz! The Mean Little Site

The PARKING LOT is FULL
An Alternative Comic Strip for Deviants

The Mean Little Column
"Martha Stewart vs. The Mean Little Man"



Martha's way: Stuff a miniature marshmallow in the bottom of a sugar cone to prevent ice cream drips.

The Mean Little Man: Suck the Ice Cream out of the bottom. For the love of god it's not that difficult. Sugar cones cost a buck 99 for 10. Anybody buying a cone for $.20 can give a rats ass if rocky road is added to the rorshach-stain of a shirt they're wearing

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Martha's way: Use a meat baster to "squeeze" your pancake batter onto the hot griddle and you'll get perfectly shape pancakes every time.

The Mean Little Man: I had a meat baster once. I haven't been able to find it since that 2-week bender I took in '98 with a couple fat stewardesses. I had no idea what happened to it till the pics surfaced on the Internet. Besides. Pancakes come from IHOP. IHOP is never to be visited during the day. And it should never be visited when you're sober enough to give a rat's red ass if they have a baster or where they stick it when they're on break.

Martha's way: To keep potatoes from budding, place an apple in the bag with the potatoes.

The Mean Little Man: First off, I'm not out to deny anything a little bud.

Martha's way: To prevent egg shells from cracking, add a pinch of salt to the water before hard boiling.

The Mean Little Man: Who cares if they crack? Aren't you going to take the shells off anyway?

Martha's way: To get the most juice out of fresh lemons, bring them to room temperature and roll them under your palm against the kitchen counter before squeezing.

The Mean Little Man: I thought lemons were plastic, hollow, with a little green lid, and held juice that smelled like Pledge?

Martha's way: To easily remove burnt-on food from your skillet, simply add a drop or two of dish soap and enough water to cover bottom of pan, and bring to a boil on stovetop.

The Mean Little Man: Use roommate's pots and pans. Burn the shit out of them. Throw them at roommate when said roommate complains

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Martha's way: Spray your Tupperware with nonstick cooking spray before pouring in tomato based sauces and there won't be any stains.

The Mean Little Man: Tupperware? Soup goes in ziplock bags. Everyone knows that

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Martha's way: When a cake recipe calls for flouring the baking pan, use a bit of the dry cake mix instead and there won't be any white mess on the outside of the cake.

The Mean Little Man: Two words. Ho-Ho's.

Martha's way: If you accidentally over salt a dish while it's still cooking, drop in a peeled potato and it will absorb the excess salt for an instant "fix me up."

The Mean Little Man: "I didn't realize I made it so salty babe. Does it make you thirsty? More wine?"

Martha's way: Wrap celery in aluminum foil when putting in the refrigerator and it will keep for weeks.

The Mean Little Man: So does a human head

Martha's way: Brush some beaten egg white over pie crust before baking to yield a beautiful glossy finish.

The Mean Little Man: Pies come from MacDonald's. Martha can bake all she wants but I can scald my mouth for 99 cents less than 3 minutes from now if I feel like it.

Martha's way: Place a slice of apple in hardened brown sugar to soften it.

The Mean Little Man: 1) Hit with a Louiseville Slugger. 2) Repeat until soft. Works with Jehovah's witnesses also.

Martha's way: When boiling corn on the cob, add a pinch of sugar to help bring out the corn's natural sweetness.

The Mean Little Man: Corn on the cob is for church picnics and family barbecues. I don't get invited to either.

Martha's way: To determine whether an egg is fresh, immerse it in a pan of cool, salted water. If it sinks, it is fresh, but if it rises to the surface, throw it away.

The Mean Little Man: When in doubt, throw at neighbor's house.

Martha's way: Cure for headaches: Take a lime, cut it in half and rub it on your forehead. The throbbing will go away.

The Mean Little Man: Take a lime, cut it in half. Add to Corona and rub it on your forehead. Drink it. Repeat. Hair of the dog.

Martha's way: Don't throw out all that leftover wine. Freeze into ice cubes for future use in casseroles and sauces.

The Mean Little Man: If I've drunk enough where I don't know if I have leftover wine or not I'm gonna have a harder time finding my pants.

Martha's way: If you have a problem opening jars try using latex dishwashing gloves. They give a non slip grip that makes opening jars easy.

The Mean Little Man: My latex gloves disappeared with the baster. Oh the tales they could tell.

Martha's way: Potatoes will take food stains off your fingers. Just slice and rub raw potato on the stains and rinse with water.

The Mean Little Man: Rub hands on shirt. Beware the rocky road stains

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Martha's way: Now look what you can do with Alka Seltzer. * Clean a toilet. Drop in two Alka-Seltzer tablets, wait twenty minutes, brush and flush. The citric acid and effervescent action clean vitreous china. * Clean a vase. To remove a stain from the bottom of a glass vase or cruet, fill with water and drop in two Alka-Seltzer tablets. * Polish jewelry. Drop two Alka-Seltzer tablets into a glass of water and immerse the jewelry for two minutes. * Clean a thermos bottle. Fill the bottle with water, drop in four Alka-Seltzer tablets, and let soak for an hour (or longer, if necessary).

The Mean Little Man: Put your jewelry, vases, and thermos in the toilet. Add some Alka-Seltzer and you have solved a whole bunch of problems at once.

Hugs and Smooches!,
The Mean Little Man on 9-6-2001.

Life In a Prism

By Marcus Pan

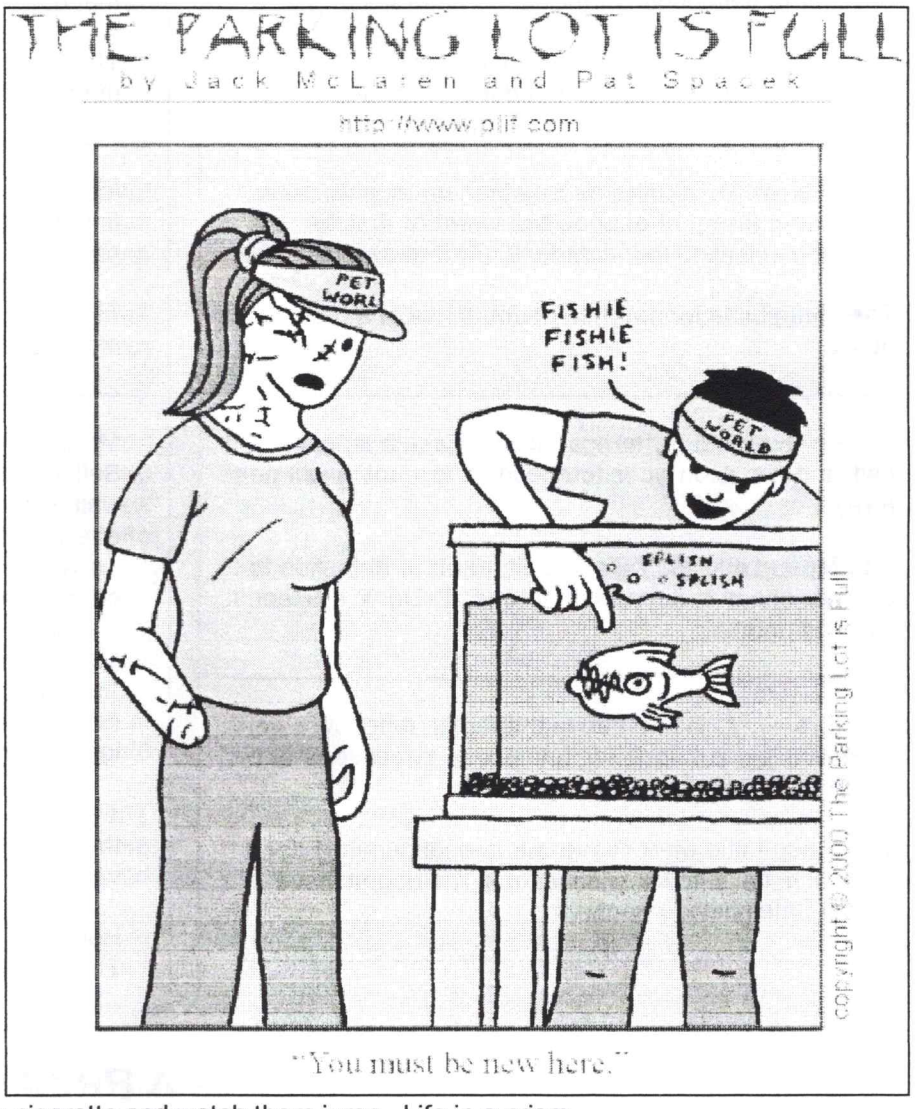
There were two of them. One was lighter than the other, but both were there. The lighter one arched over the brighter of the two, contrasting it and showing the difference between a little and a lot. They arched over the PNC Bank building on Rt. 18...the one I passed every day to and from work. Today I was riding with Kim, and he saw the rainbows the same time I did.

It has been years since I've seen a rainbow. This, however, was the first time I've seen two. It was also the first time that I've seen one so bright, the colors fading from indigo to red to orange to yellow to green to blue and all the colors in between and doing so brightly enough that you can make out the separate bands of each. It dwarfed the bank. A huge video test on the world's biggest screen. Nature got a new video card.

"How many colors are there?" Kim asked me. That's when I remembered that Kim was colorblind. I couldn't imagine life without being surrounded by so many colors; but likewise he couldn't imagine life with them. I read them off, going from the top of the arc to its inside, marveling even more. The colors there were so pure...there was none of this teal, almond, or any other Crayola-created crap colors in there. The type that expectant mothers demand their baby's room to be, or their couch has to match. It was just the purest ones...those that make up all the others in the world.

That was yesterday.

This morning I find myself seeing things in a brighter way following the rainbow. I notice all the different greens and browns scattered about. There's more than just dark green or light green. There's that green of that particular pine tree but not of the pine tree over there. There's the green on the oak tree hanging on for dear life as the orange miasma of Autumn overtakes it. The green of this grass blade and the green of that grass blade, they're different too. You could say the same for the browns...and all the others. The older man walking along the road had on a hat as orange as a traffic cone. The girl with the sweater that would put any banana in the world to shame. So many different colors...and they were there all along. I just didn't notice them until I got a chance to count off the purest colors of the rainbow. Now I see them all...everything's brighter and more powerful after that experience. Even the gray of that patch of sky is different than the gray in the other patch of sky. I'm living in a prism today. It's nice here.



I know this is a feeling that will pass. Most of them do. I won't have time to look at all the different colors in the world on Monday when I have computers to build. But today is Friday, and I can relax a bit, take it easier than normal as the weekend wraps its white shroud and hastens me off to do fuck-all for a couple days. And the colors will all wave and dance and play around me as I stand on my balcony with my cigarette and watch them jump. Life in a prism.

When they first pumped up computer video to supprt 16.8 million colors I was amused by it. "Who needs that many colors?" I would scoff. Now I look around me...I'm not so sure it's enough. I wonder how many Nature's new card can do?

REVIEW: IN THE NURSERY — "ENGEL"

By Mike Ventarola

There are some artists who know how to dazzle an audience and then there are others with the ability to quietly put the listener and fan in total rapture and awe. In The Nursery is one such outfit that transcends the label "band" and qualifies as a group of brilliant orchestral performers.

Engel is their latest release, created for a multimedia game project of the same name and designed by the German publishing house Feder & Schwert. On this CD are new recordings of classic tracks such as *Blue Religion* and *To The Faithful*, along with new material including *Angelorum* and *Beutereiter*. **Engel** sprawls with atmospherics that transports listeners to another realm in order that it would play well as both a listening experience as well as a game soundtrack. The

music is nothing short of majestic, combining elements of the medieval along with modern electronics. Not having seen this game, this review is based upon the mental images that this superb CD has evoked from the imagination.

New Religion whirls us into this unknown land, full of lush mountains and ornate castles. This opening track is breathtaking simply for the scope and grandeur it conveys. One can envision a battalion of horse ridden knights in their metal armor and velvet finery charging up the crested slopes after a long battle. *Beutereiter* opens with a grandiose organ and angelic choir, underscored by a pulsing electronic rhythm line. The track veers into a panoramic study of a land that seems surrounded by dangerous cliffs that plummet to an ocean depth. *Angelorum* mixes a sense of the forbidden along with anticipatory fervency. Sung in Latin, whose lyrics are included and translated in English and German as well, we are given a glimpse into one person's entreaty to the divine powers. *Pandoramicum*: Thunderous sounds are disclosed in the background, giving rise to electronic layers, which are at once foreboding and anticipatory for the mêlée to come. It is though the heavens have opened with a storm of foreshadowing for the impending and imminent distress.

Cathedral of Thoughts seems to marry the simple flute playing of a villager, which transcends the heavens to appeal to the Gods. This is further evidenced as a quiet choir of angels accompanies the track. We are then moved towards gently lavish and ornate horns, as though a divine intercession is transpiring. *Gabrielites*: Since this track is full of energy, horns and bombastic splendor; one would assume that it is named after the Archangel Gabriel, renowned to blow the horn of the final apocalypse. Angelic choirs float momentarily between the tension, creating a vivid landscape of sound and color.

Engel- To The Faithful: Heavenly splendor is the best way to describe this track. The opening once again is majestic, warm and all encompassing. It is though a radiant light is suffused to the inner core of one's existence. In the background, it seems as though there is a sword fight. This is the second track with sung lyrics, which is the supplication of the people. *Aftermath* opens with a wailing horn, similar to the Jewish shofar horns. A melancholy feeling of loss, relief and hope are encompassed in the notes surrounding this one note horn. It is a bittersweet tribute to the reckoning of what one has had to lose in order to win.

Sigil seems to evoke mystery and magic. There are background ocean sounds and churchlike organs, which herald a new comprehension and sense of respect. *Brandland* gives the impression of a walk through a treacherous landscape during the night hours. Church gongs and cymbals are placed strategically between the rushing energy of sound. A steady percussive beat with angelic choirs hovering around us makes this a great track to feature in the dance clubs as well. *The Circling Sky* evinces a new dawning of existence. Life seems to be somewhat more peaceful once again, though the scars from the road will never be forgotten.

In The Nursery have had numerous features in film soundtracks and trailers which includes *Along Came A Spider, Erin Brockovich, Interview With A Vampire, The Sweet Hereafter*, and *The Rainmaker*. In addition, they have also created optical music performances for silent classics such as *The Cabinet Of Dr. Caligari, Asphalt, Man With A Movie Camera*, and *Hindle Wakes*, which have toured extensively in art houses throughout the world to sold out performances.

In The Nursery remains as one of those bands embraced by the gothic underground because of their ability to transcend time and place. Their work is at once majestic, effervescent, lavish and opulent, however it is always approachable without ever being stuck in any genre niche. In light of their past success, it is only natural that their great ability to orchestrate sound, which create vivid mental images, is finally featured on game soundtracks as well. With each passing release, In The Nursery manages to keep their fans in total awe with the quality and scope of their work. If you are not yet familiar with this group of talented artists, you can sample some of their work at www.mp3.com/inthenursery to give your ears a musical feast.

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Web: http://www.inthenursery.com

OFF THE SHELF: "THE ALCHEMIST"

By Marcus Pan

I'm not sure where this book came from, but I'm assuming the same place as the past two Piers Anthony's I reviewed here. Fortunately however, *The Alchemist* by Kenneth Goddard, was thoroughly more enjoyed than the Piers books. *The Alchemist* is a cop drama style story with a lot of high-action and drug and mob organizations thrown in for good measure. It builds to a great closing and is quite well researched as well, making it believable. Mr. Goddard is, after all, a forensic scientist.

I found some flaws in *The Alchemist* however. Such as the fact that it could have been shorter. While the novel did provide a lot of action, there were a few parts – most notably earlier in the novel – where it would drag a little more than necessary. It could have been edited down a bit with size in mind.

But there is a lot of action here. Most of the main characters are well created and thought out, Vietnam war veteran and hero cop Ben Koda being a favorite. A few could have been given a bit more depth – Lacotta the organized crime boss and Jimmy Pilgrim as well, for example. But they could be overlooked with more well drawn characters like Charley Shannon and Fogarty. Another problem with the book is it is rife with clichés, at least by today's standards. It was written in '85 however, and while I'm not sure when *Miami Vice* started airing, it might be a forerunner instead of a carrier of such clichés.

The gist of the story is that a new drug has been developed. Showing superior intellect in the forensics and illicit substance areas, Goddard takes us on a whirlwind through the creation and production of a new hallucinogenic drug. However, this one hasn't been thought of yet – so the *Mind Rainbow*, as it's become known as, is actually legal for the time being. While this is going on, a DEA task force step in to try and infiltrate the Californian organized crime family of Jake Locotta – and most specifically in the area controlled by his underling Jimmy Pilgrim, as a means to take down as many high-rankers in the group in a drug buy sting. But when *Mind Rainbow* gets going things get out of hand – and a key fun point of the book is that the DEA force wasn't going in for anything related to a new drug, so they get mixed up in the crime family's upheaval as that gets underway.

With a few small bumps, such as it shouldn't have taken me this long to read for one, *The Alchemist* is a well written crime drama. It's highly believable, has some interesting characters and an excellent wrap up ending.

"The Alchemist" by Kenneth Goddard
Published by Bantam Books, Inc.
Copyright © 1985 by Kenneth Goddard
ISBN 0-553-25598-3

REVIEW: RAZED IN BLACK – "OH MY GOTH!"

By Pat Hawkes-Reed (GothPat)

According to the back of the CD, this is a maxi-EP, with various remixes done of the title tune for trance and breaks DJs, as well as 6 other tracks that, before this EP, only appeared on various compilations.

I really liked the original version of *Oh My Goth!* I haven't heard it played in clubs (though I get the impression from the CD that it has been popular in US goth clubs), and would like to hear it in the ones I go to in the UK. Nice vocals – though I prefer the original version to the *Nubreaks Virus Mix* version, which is rougher and almost a bit generic sounding. There is also an extended club version of *Nubreaks Virus Mix*. The *Dj R<i>B Trance* remix is also a version I would like to hear in clubs...it would be interesting to see if it went down well in a techno/trance club rather than a goth club. There are 3 versions of this – two are extended for club mixing.

Master has a steady pounding beat, but suffers a bit from NIN-style vocals. *Everything's Gone Green* is a cover of the New Order classic, (nicely done) and RiB gives the song their own twist...very cool. I had to get up and do a bit of a dance when listening to this...a good thing.

Nevermeant starts promisingly, but didn't quite get my full attention. *Nightmare* has the same NIN vocals, but the tune and beat rescue it admirably. This is one song I would love to hear fullblast on a massive club sound system. Noting that Reza of Inertia did the remix, makes me realise that this is why I like it.

When Will I Awake? is more in the same vein as *Master* and *Nightmare*. *Overflow* has a very techno-trance sound to it. Very smooth and flowing with good background vocals.

All in all, I liked this EP a lot, and would be very interested in looking into hearing more.

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REVIEW: COUP D'ETAT – "DEATH OF AN IMAGE"

By Dan Century

Lately the only time I get to listen to music is while driving my car. Some days I drive 200-300 boring miles a day, and music and caffeine are the only things that keeps me going. Despite being in the car for 2-4 hours a day, I still don't have patience for crappy music. It's also important to have the right music for the right traffic – if I'm racing to a meeting at 90mph I need something with lots of energy, like Slayer, Ministry, Powerman5000 or Bis. Once I hit traffic, I fall back on something mellow, like a classical station, Dead Can Dance or some Desmond Decker. It's all about managing your moods and making the most of the moment.

Fortunately for both myself and Coup D'eTat, when I first listened to this disk I was cruising along the Garden State Parkway around 8pm at night with no traffic holding me back and not a cop in sight. As I tore through the clear black night at 85 miles per hour, Coup D'eTat's dark, aggressive music made perfect sense.

The Gothic and Industrial genres have shared the same scene at least since Love and Rockets and Nitzer Ebb toured together in the late 80's. If you like one genre chances are pretty good that you'll at least tolerate the other. Coup D'eTat mix the disjointed lyrics, distorted vocals and pounding beats of Industrial with the minor chords, dominant bass grooves and persistent echo of Goth-rock, and they do it well. Imagine the best elements of Skinny Puppy, Nitzer Ebb, Southern Death Cult and **Pornography** era Cure, and you'll have a good idea of what Coup D'eTat sound like. **Death of an Image**, Coup D'eTat's new 6-song EP, provides us with a excellent sampling of the their range and talent:

On *Disdaine*, as on any classic Industrial tune, Coup make good use of sampled vocals to stir up tension and portray chaos and disorder. Add to the mix some serious echo drenched Goth 'n' roll guitar & bass, and you have a good introduction to the sound of the band: Dark, disturbed and classically familiar. *Umbilical* introduces us to Coup D'eTat's vocal sound: male, growled, fragmented, more poetry than prose. The music takes several musical turns, building tension and releasing terror. As mentioned before, it's good driving music.

Anxious is pure Industrial: aggro guitars and vocals, mechanical keyboard melodies, throbbing beats and shocks of electronic noise provide the perfect soundtrack for some serious dance floor boot stomping. Work off your anxiety and

scare everyone in the club. *Abandon Frequency* is a frantic and seriously creepy song that changes moods and directions on a dime. A good example of their musical talent and ability to synthesize genres.

If you like your chocolate in your peanut butter, or at least Goth in your Industrial, give **Death of an Image** a try. If you're into the G/I music and scene, I imagine Coup D'eTat would be a great band for you to see live.

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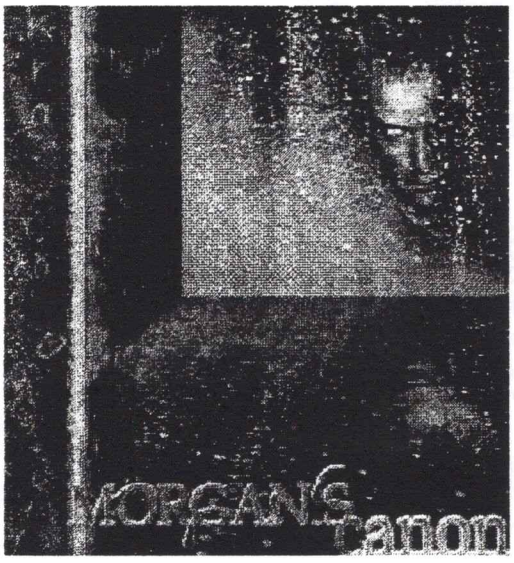
REVIEW: MORGAN'S CANON – "FOR WATER"

By Chris Eissing



Morgan's Canon is a genuine mix of styles. Heavily drawing its melodic stylings from Eastern-European baroque, these old-word flavors are combined with contemporary industrial motifs. Mixing male and female vocals with a base of electronic rhythm and wall-of sound noise-based guitars give Morgan's Canon a familiar but intriguing sound at a casual listen.

But digging deeper into the album, **For Water** sounds more like a rough draft than a finished product. The skeleton is there, but the features still need polishing. Getting manhandled by a good post-production producer and engineer would do this album some good. If this album were done by a hobbyist I'd give kudos for an above-average effort. But a lot was put into this album's packaging and promotion, and it is not the first offering for the band. So for them the bar is raised a little.

First off, vocals. The female vocals are well-placed and serve well as both a harmony and melody. But there is something lacking in them that gives it a first-take-and-out sound. The composition of the male and female vocals is very well done. But the sound does break down here and there. Not often. But enough to recognize it is a common deficiency in this album. There are moments of awkward rhythm and breakdowns of remaining in tune. And if a voice, male or female, is going to attempt an operatic styling for effect it needs to be stronger. It's close. Its breakdowns are almost subtle enough not to be noticed. Almost.

The drums are provided, sight unseen, by an off-the-shelf drum machine. The stock-sounds are rather noticeable. Plus many of the loops are clean enough to detract from the very organic music over top of it, as in *Feed*. There are some bright spots. The somber ballad *Vampire Girl* is reminiscent of a dark duet from a theatrical show. *Only Words*, another of their more melancholy-paced selections works better for its minimalism.

Morgan's Canon is a great example of less is more. When they strip a song down to its essentials they produce far better works than when the try to create large industrial walls of sound. Also, their harder songs seem to be too derivative of German-based industrial. Hard to pull off, and rarely good when it does work. Their selection Of Cemetaries falls victim to this.

If this music were in a movie, what would it be? I think their selection *Krime* would play well in any movie where Angelina Jolie has a rampant abandon sex scene involving farm animals and spade shovels to the head. It of course won't be seen until the Director's Cut on DVD.

A little clarity on the name?

Lloyd Morgan's canon: Articulated in 1894 by the British physiologist/psychologist Conway Lloyd Morgan, it cautioned against the explanatory excesses of the new field of comparative psychology by stating that in interpreting the behavior of an animal it is always preferable to use the psychologically simplest interpretation. Specifically, it is preferable to use the lower or more primitive explanation rather than to assume the action of a higher, more mentalistic process. The canon

was very influential in the work of early behaviorists such as Watson and Thorndike. The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology, ©© Arthur S. Reber 1995.

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AFTERWORD

And there you have it. Three articles, reviews of Noise Process, Girls Under Glass and Braindance had to jump into the January issue due to deadline troubles so apologies to those three groups for the delay. It happens, sorry again. I already have the Noise Process review in, I just couldn't get it into the issue before production closed. We do our best here, but sometimes we miss a beat every now and then.

Onward to other things – besides the three above-mentioned reviews next month I will have a pile more of course including Cesium: 137, Vampire Nation, Rachel's Surrender and Bitter Fall which will be the debut of our latest review staffer – pixie. Lots more beyond including some feature interviews as well.

THE PARKING LOT IS FULL
by Jack McLaren and Pat Spacek
http://www.plif.com
BUGS!.. BUGS ALL OVER MEE!!
NO, NO, NOT BUGS... ..HEADS!! GIANT RUBBER HEADS!!
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The Schizophrenia Society Presidential Debates

Sue Simpson will be with us again as will the long-awaited return of Eric Busby – hopefully the latter with more illustration by Lee Alverson though he's been busy as of late. Watch for *A Bottle of Blue Pills* (with or without illustration – hopefully with, of course).

I review a non-fiction book in Off The Shelf – and then a really shitty piece of fiction. Another three doses of The Parking Lot is Full! Mike Ventarola's *MP3: The Music Revolution* and The Mean Little Man rants about bombs!

FEATURES for next month: Cover design by Rev. Daryl Litts, who did the covers for Legends #111 and #115 (June and October of this year respectively). Feature music interviews with Netz and Massiv In Mensch! Debut of our next fiction master, Unkle Joz, with *Lucy Grieves*!

And I will leave off this month with some laughs. First, eyes left for the final dosage of PLIF. And now a joke...

What did one sagging boob say to the other sagging boob? We better get some support or people are going to think we're nuts!

HAR HAR!

Marcus Pan
November 27, 2001 – 11:36AM